

RELATIONS BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND THE SUDAN
ON THE WESTERN ETHIOPIAN FRONTIER

1898-1935

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Thesis submitted for
the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of London

May 1976





ABSTRACT

The Ethiopian victory at Adwa in 1896 and the British conquest of the Sudan in 1898 determined the nature of the relationship between the two African countries in the first thirty-five years of this century. An European colony came to adjoin a politically independent Ethiopia. In 1902, the boundary between the two countries was formally delimited after four years of diplomatic wrangling and manoeuvring. The peoples of the borderland, the parties most directly affected by the issue, had little say in the final outcome of the negotiations. But some of them did try to influence it to a degree hitherto scarcely recognized. Formal delimitation aside, the frontier peoples pursued a life of virtual independence from both Khartoum and Addis Ababa. The defiance of Akwei in the south was matched by that of the Wad Mahmud family in the north. What little control the Ethiopian authorities managed to exercise in the frontier regions was achieved either through the collaboration of Anyuaa leaders like Udial and the ruthless policy of Majid Abud, or by bolstering the position of Sheikh Khojali in the sa'id. Such tenuous Ethiopian government control provided the setting - and the pretext - for the longstanding desire of the Sudan government to incorporate the Baro lowlands.

The Gambella trading post epitomized the new relationship between Ethiopia and British-ruled Sudan. Problems of transport and communication, the ambiguous

legal status of the enclave, and the general features of an economy where commodity production had scarcely begun frustrated the high hopes that the British had entertained in establishing the post. Jibouti's pre-eminence as the entrepôt of Ethiopia's foreign trade remained unchallenged. Nevertheless, Gambella dislodged Matamma and the sa'id as the most important channel of Ethio-Sudanese trade. Like Jibouti, it was the medium by which Ethiopia was drawn, if only reluctantly, into the world market. This process of Ethiopia's integration into the world economy was particularly underlined in western Ethiopia by the relentless quest of international capital for commercial, agricultural, and mining concessions.

Chapter 4. The Gambella Trading Post (1891-1900)

Chapter 5. The Gambella Trading Post (1900-1914)

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PREFACE

This study concentrates on that section of the Ethio-Sudanese frontier which is bound by the Blue Nile in the north and the Akobo river in the south; i.e. the western parts of present-day Wallaga and Illubabor and the Sudanese districts adjacent to them. The Matamma and Maji sections of the frontier have largely been excluded. Their inclusion would have made any profound treatment of the subject over a period of some thirty-five years a difficult task. Gambella, as the point of most direct and significant contact between the Ethiopians and the British rulers of the Sudan, is the focal point of the study.

A word or two on the transliteration of Ethiopian and Sudanese (Arabic) names is in order. The system I have followed conforms more to convention and common sense than science, in as much as one can say there is a scientific rendering of Ethiopian names at all. But I have tried to be consistent. The first and fourth orders of the Amharic characters are represented by "a", and the third and sixth by "i". I have preferred "i" to "e" for the sixth because the former is much more common in Ethiopian usage. With regard to Arabic names, the standard rendering has been followed as much as possible. But such common English forms as "Roseires" and "Sennar" have been retained. Diacriticals have been dispensed with, except in a few cases like "sa'id" and "qanazmach".

In the course of my research, I have been assisted, financially or otherwise, by a number of

individuals and organizations. To them all, I express my gratitude. The British Council has sponsored my studies in Britain. My five months' research in the Sudan and Ethiopia was made possible by grants from the School of Oriental and African Studies and the Central Research Fund of the University of London. The Institute of African and Asian Studies in Khartoum greatly facilitated my stay in the Sudan. I also record with satisfaction the co-operation shown to me by the staffs of the libraries and archives centres that I worked in, in particular those of the Public Records Office in London, the Oriental Section of the University library at Durham, and the Central Records Office in Khartoum. To the many individuals who were willing to share their time with me, answering my queries or giving me advice, I register my gratitude. To all my informants, particularly to Qañazmach Majid Abud, I owe special thanks. To my supervisor, Professor Holt, who gave me guidance and encouragement through the ordeals and pleasures of producing this thesis, I am particularly indebted.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAIR	Addis Ababa Intelligence Report
ADI	acting director of Intelligence (Khartoum)
<u>A&P</u>	<u>Accounts and Papers</u>
App.	appendix
A.R.	annual report
BNP	Blue Nile Province
<u>B.S.</u>	<u>Birhanina Salam</u>
<u>Bull. Soc. Géog.</u>	<u>Bulletin de la Société de Géographie</u>
CEB	Central Economic Board (Khartoum)
CIB	Commercial Intelligence Branch (Khartoum)
civ sec	civil secretary (Khartoum)
CO	Colonial Office (London)
C.R.	commercial report
CRO	Central Records Office (Khartoum)
DC	district commissioner
DI	director of Intelligence (Khartoum)
dir.	director
DOT	Department of Overseas Trade (London)
DUR	Durham
EC	Ethiopian calendar
encl.	enclosure
fin sec	financial secretary (Khartoum)
FO	Foreign Office (London)
<u>Geog. Zeit.</u>	<u>Geographische Zeitschrift</u>
GFM	German Foreign Ministry
GG	governor-general (Khartoum)
<u>GJ</u>	<u>The Geographical Journal</u>
govr.	governor

HSIU Haile Sellassie I University, now Addis Ababa
University

Intel Intelligence

JAH Journal of African History

JES Journal of Ethiopian Studies

JRAS Journal of the Royal African Society

KTC Kordofan Trading Company

leg sec legal secretary (Khartoum)

O.I. oral informant

priv.sec. private secretary (Khartoum)

RH Rhodes House (Oxford)

SA St. Anthony's College (Oxford)

sec. of st. secretary of state

SIR Sudan Intelligence Report

SMIR Sudan Monthly Intelligence Report

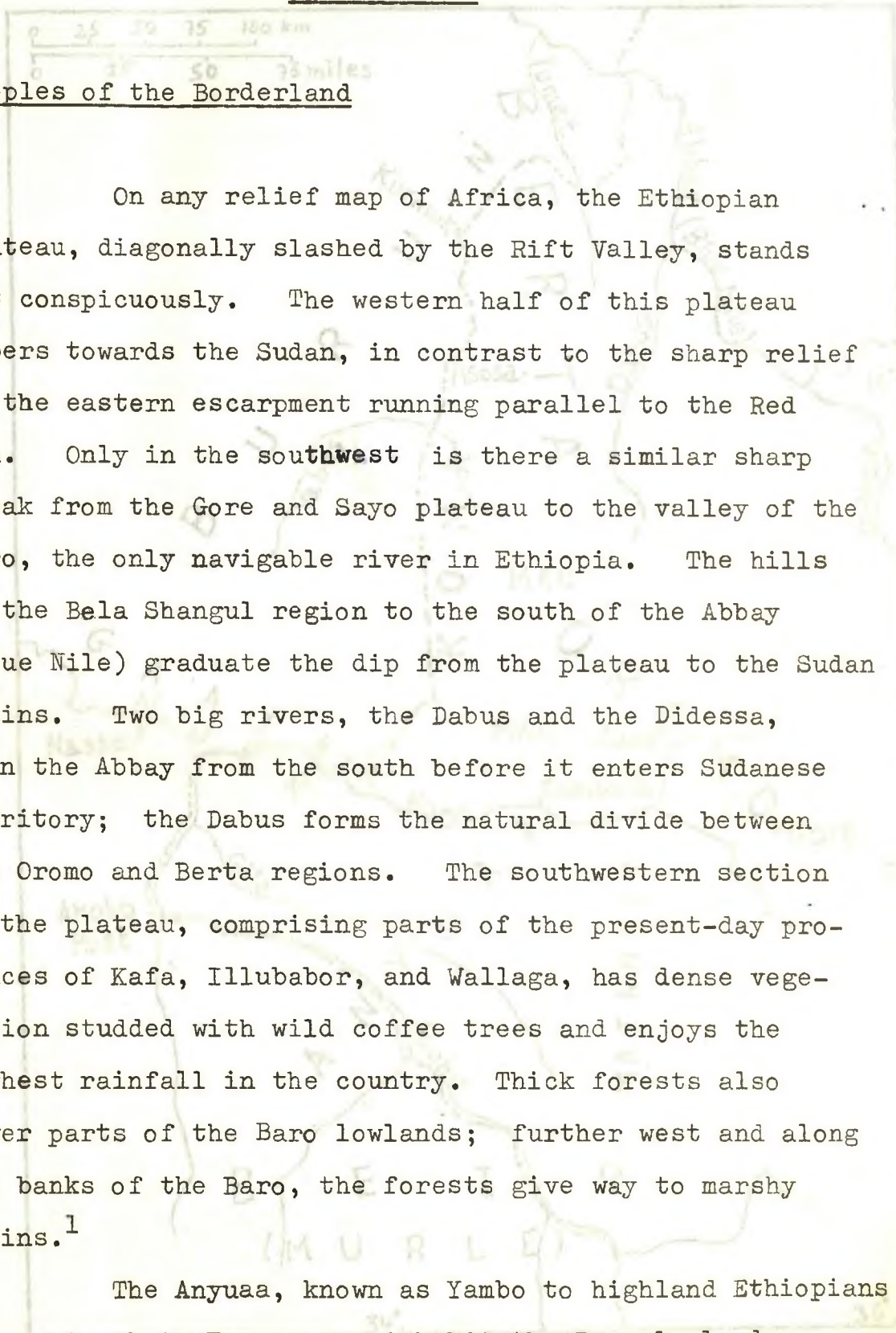
SMR Sudan Monthly Record

SNR Sudan Notes and Records

UNP Upper Nile Province

WO War Office (London)

1. Herfin Wolfe Harlan, An Impersonal Geography of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, 1947).

INTRODUCTIONPeoples of the Borderland


On any relief map of Africa, the Ethiopian plateau, diagonally slashed by the Rift Valley, stands out conspicuously. The western half of this plateau tapers towards the Sudan, in contrast to the sharp relief of the eastern escarpment running parallel to the Red Sea. Only in the southwest is there a similar sharp break from the Gore and Sayo plateau to the valley of the Baro, the only navigable river in Ethiopia. The hills of the Bela Shangul region to the south of the Abbay (Blue Nile) graduate the dip from the plateau to the Sudan plains. Two big rivers, the Dabus and the Didessa, join the Abbay from the south before it enters Sudanese territory; the Dabus forms the natural divide between the Oromo and Berta regions. The southwestern section of the plateau, comprising parts of the present-day provinces of Kafa, Illubabor, and Wallaga, has dense vegetation studded with wild coffee trees and enjoys the highest rainfall in the country. Thick forests also cover parts of the Baro lowlands; further west and along the banks of the Baro, the forests give way to marshy plains.¹

The Anyuua, known as Yambo to highland Ethiopians and as Anuak to Europeans, inhabit the Baro lowlands.

1. Mesfin Wolde Mariam, An Introductory Geography of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, 1972), pp. 42-43, 61, 68.

1. Peoples of the Borderland

They have linguistic and cultural affinities to the Shilluk and are usually classified with the Shilluk-Luo group of the Nilotic peoples. They occupy an area south of the Baro, east of the Pibor, north of rivers Ajibur and Oboth, and west of 35°E longitude. They are believed to have occupied a wider area in earlier centuries but to have been pushed progressively to the east by successive Nuer raids. A small section of the Anyuaa still remains trapped in Nuer territory west of Nasser. The rest are mostly found on the Ethiopian side of the boundary. In 1911, the Ethiopian Anyuaa were reported to have a male population of 40,000;¹ another source estimated the Sudan Anyuaa in 1940 at 30-40,000.² The Anyuaa are a predominantly agricultural people, and the Baro Anyuaa in particular have earned the admiration of many observers in the past for their industry and friendly disposition.³ They grew cotton, tobacco, and grains. They traded the cotton with the Oromo on the plateau for, among other things, beads; the Anyuaa have in fact sometimes been known as the people of beads. By contrast, the Gila Anyuaa were forced by the swampy nature of their terrain to lead a

1. SIR 200, Mar. 1911.

2. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, The Political System of the Anuak of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Monographs on Social Anthropology, no. 4 (London, 1940), p. 7.

3. Charles Michel, Vers Fashoda (Paris, 1900), p. 293; H.H. Austin, Among Swamps and Giants in Equatorial Africa (London, 1902), p. 18; Gleichen, ed., The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (London, 1905), vol. I, p. 134; SIR 200, Mar. 1911.

4. C.H. Seligman, "Warrior classes of the Sudan", Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist., 1913, pp. 118-119.

5. H.C. Jackson, "The Nuer of the Sudan", BNR, VI (1923), p. 66.

miserable existence; they were also on the line of raiding and elephant-hunting parties descending from the highlands.¹

Further to the west stretch the marshes of the southern Sudan. The Anyuaa's immediate neighbours and ancestral enemies were another Nilotic people, the Nuer, known as Abigar to highland Ethiopians. Unlike the Anyuaa, the Nuer were a pastoral people. "Their social idiom," in Evans-Pritchard's words, "is a bovine idiom."² They supplemented their pastoral livelihood with fishing. Their seasonal movements were thus in search of fish as well as pasture. Their raids were also mostly cattle raids. The Dinka bore the brunt of Nuer expansion. The Anyuaa likewise were pushed to the east. In 1905, one report described the Nuer as the "most powerful and numerous tribe living along the Sobat river".³ They were able to adapt their age-grade system to the development of an elaborate military organization and the formation of a warrior class.⁴ The amorphous nature of Nuer political organization was the despair of British administrators in the Sudan who wanted to extend their authority through the agency of recognizable chiefs.⁵ Throughout the first two decades

1. Gleichen, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 138; Austin, Among Swamps and Giants, p. 47. See also M. Lionel Bender, The Ethiopian Nilo-Saharans (Addis Ababa, 1975), pp. 47-49, for the linguistic position of the Anyuaa, spelt "Anywa" by the author.

2. The Nuer (Oxford, 1940), p. 19.

3. Gleichen, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 132.

4. C.H. Stigand, "Warrior classes of the Nuers", SNR, I (1918), pp. 116-118.

5. H.C. Jackson, "The Nuer of the Upper Nile Province", SNR, VI (1923), p. 60.

of this century, the Nuer remained largely independent of British administrative control and particularly resented attempts to collect from them tribute in the form of cattle.¹ The section of the Nuer who had most contact with the Ethiopian plateau were the Gaajak, who traded ivory for iron and later guns from the Oromo.² The splitting of the eastern Gaajak by the boundary in 1902 and the forcible separation of those in the Sudan from their traditional grazing ground in Ethiopia became one of the intractable boundary problems between the two countries.

The natural barriers between the plateau and the plains inhibited the growth of any substantial interaction between the Anyuua and Nuer on the one hand and the highland Ethiopians on the other. What little contact there had been was mainly with the Oromo, who inhabited the highlands of most of present-day Wallaga and Illubabor. They were relative newcomers to the region: the first Oromo settlement in southwestern Wallaga does not seem to pre-date the 18th century.³ Initially, the pastoral Oromo had an egalitarian social and political system known as the gada. But as they began to settle permanently as

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1. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Economic life of the Nuer: Cattle", *SNR*, XX (1937), p. 241; cf. Alexander Solon Cudsi, Sudanese Resistance to British Rule, 1900-1920, M.A. dissertation (University of Khartoum, 1969), for Nuer resistance.
 2. Evans-Pritchard, Nuer, p. 87; Jackson, "The Nuer", pp. 61, 138.
 3. Bahru Zewde, A Biography of Dejazmach Jote Tulu, Abba Iggu (1855-1918), B.A. dissertation (HSIU, 1970), p. 2.

agriculturalists, class differentiation developed and corroded their democratic institutions; a new hereditary ruling class emerged. The clearest example of this development was the rise of the Wanaga dynasty in Qellam in western Wallaga; Jote Tulu, who later as Minilik's dajazmach became ruler of the whole of southwestern Wallaga and contested authority over Gambella with Ras Tassamma, was a member of this dynasty. Dajach Kumsa Moroda represented a similar development in eastern Wallaga.¹ In the Bure and Gore regions, too, the gada institutions had given way to powerful ruling families by the time Emperor Minilik's forces reached the area in the 1880s.²

To the north and northwest of the Oromo, inhabiting the hills and valleys that gradually merge into the Sudan plains were the Berta-speaking people. Little is known of their linguistic and ethnic position in relation to neighbouring peoples in the Sudan and Ethiopia.³ But

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1. Herbert Lewis, "A Reconsideration of the Socio-Political System of the Western Galla", Journal of Semitic Studies, IX (1964), pp. 139-142; Alessandro Triulzi, "Some Notes on the Galla Countries south of the Abbay Prior to the Battle of Embabo (1840s-1882)", A Paper submitted to the Conference of the Historical Society of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, June 4-5, 1973.
 2. O.I. (Taye).
 3. Alessandro Triulzi, "Trade, Islam, and the Mahdia in Northwestern Wallaga, Ethiopia", JAH, XVI, 1 (1975), pp. 55, 57; Evans-Pritchard, in "Ethnological Observations in Dar-Fung", SNR, XV (1932), p. 54, cites a survey showing Berta and other related languages as having up to 25% affinity to Nilotic ones. Ernesta Cerulli's references to the Berta, in Peoples of Southwest Ethiopia and its Borderland (London, 1956), p. 11, are clearly inadequate. See, however, forthcoming study of the Berta by Atieb Ahmed Dafalla, Alessandro Triulzi, and M. Lionel Bender. Cf. Bender, pp. 56-57.

there seems to be a consensus that they were the original inhabitants of what the Sudanese have come to refer to as the sa'id.¹ Relatively speaking at any rate, for they have a tradition that they themselves once moved into the region from the west.² Their staple crop is durra. A hierarchical form of political organization may very well have evolved internally.³ But it is generally associated with the imposition of Funj, most probably Hamaj, aristocracies over the Berta from the 17th century on. This new ruling class intermarried with the local Berta, and their offspring came to be known as Jabalawin (hill people); the Berta were meanwhile dislodged from their abode on the hills and forced to live on the plains.⁴ Fazughli, Keili, Bela Shangul, and Khomosha were some of the principal centres of Jabalawin rule. But the hold of Sennar, if any, on these distant mekships was apparently only nominal.⁵

The sa'id entered a new phase in its historical evolution in the nineteenth century when Arabs, representing a fair cross-section of the tribes of the northern Sudan,

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1. This was a term used to signify the upper reaches of the Blue Nile, in the same way as it was used to designate Upper Egypt.
 2. Atieb Ahmed Dafalla, Sheikh Khojele Al-Hassan and Bélā-Shāngul (1825-1938), B.A. dissertation (HSIU, 1973), p. 2.
 3. Atieb thus speaks of a "King" Berthuwabune: loc.cit.
 4. Ibid., p. 3.
 5. SOAS Ms 210522, Arkell Papers, 2nd batch, Box 11, p. 1. I am indebted to Dr Wendy James and Dr R.S. O'Fahey for bringing these papers to my attention.

began to enter the region in fairly large numbers. Some came as traders (jallaba), others as religious teachers (fugara). A sizeable number arrived after the burning of Ismail Pasha, son of Muhammad Ali of Egypt, at Shandi in 1822.¹ Like the Funj before them, the Arabs intermarried with the Berta and their offspring have come to be known as Watawit.² The more enterprising ingratiated themselves with the local makk by their clerical skills, married into their families, and eventually seized political power. Thus, the first Arab ruler of Bela Shangul, Fadli, was the son of a Yaqubabi merchant and a daughter of the Jabalawi makk, Idris. Fadli was the great grandfather of Abd al-Rahman Khojali (commonly known as Tur al-Guri), whose rule, spanning the periods of Mahdist and Ethiopian sway in the region, marked the apogee of Bela Shangul power in the sa'id. The same pattern of Watawit ascendancy through political marriage was repeated in the founding of the sheikhdoms of Khomosha to the west and Aqoldi (Asosa) further south.³

Of the other peoples of the borderland, the Burun (sometimes referred to as the Barun) are now almost entirely on the Sudanese side. Their language is closer to

1. Triulzi, "Trade, Islam", pp. 58-61; Arkell papers, Chataway to DI, 13.8.28; G.O. Whitehead, "Italian Travellers in the Berta Country", SNR, XVII (1934), p. 219.

2. Atieb, p. 6; Ernst Marno, Reisen im Gebiete des Blauen und Weissen Nil (Wien, 1874), p. 52.

3. Atieb, pp. 7-9; FO 1/45, encl. in Wingate to FO, 24.9.01. A slightly different version of the process is recorded in Arkell Papers, pp. 1-2, 3.

5. Circo Mangistu, The Buses of ... D.A. dissertation (MSIC, 1973).

6. E.g. Michel, p. 425.

the Nilotic languages than Berta.¹ Their weapons mostly consisted of bows and arrows. The northern section lived on hills adjoining those of the Tabi (Ingassana) while the southern section inhabited the Yabus plains. Both were constant targets of slave raids by the Watawit, Oromo, and Anyuaa.² Another people who were victims of Oromo and Watawit slave raids were the Koma, an agricultural people who inhabited the western foothills of the Wallaga plateau.³ The Amam were a linguistically related people found between the Oromo and the Berta. Adjoining them were the northern section of the Mao, separated from their southern kin by the Oromo.⁴ The southern Mao, inhabiting the coffee-rich forests of Anfillo, were ruled by the Busasi, who had cultural and linguistic affinities to the people of Kafa, from where they are traditionally believed to have originated.⁵ On the escarpment between the plateau and the Anyuaa plains were located the Majangir (commonly known as Masango). They were once believed to be related to the Anyuaa.⁶ Recent research

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1. Evans-Pritchard, "Dar Fung Ethnology", p. 54; cf. Wendy R. James, "Social Assimilation and Changing Identity in the Southern Funj", Sudan in Africa, ed. Yusuf Fadl Hasan (Khartoum, 1971), pp. 198-200.
 2. Evans-Pritchard, "Dar Fung Ethnology", pp. 12 ff; Gleichen, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 122; H.R.J. Davies, "Some Tribes of the Ethiopian Borderland between the Blue Nile and Sobat Rivers", SNR, XLI (1960), pp. 21 ff; C.H. Stigand, "Notes on the Burun", SNR, V (1922), pp. 223-224.
 3. Ernesta Cerulli, pp. 12-18; Davies, p. 27; SIR 282, Jan. 1918; Bender, pp. 65-68.
 4. See Vingi L. Grottanelli, I Mao (Roma, 1940), for a comprehensive study of the Mao; cf. Bender, pp. 71-73.
 5. Girma Mangistu, The Busase of Anfillo, Qellam, Wallaga, B.A. dissertation (HSIU, 1973).
 6. E.g. Michel, p. 435.

suggests, however, that they have more in common with the "Nilo-Hamitic" group further south.¹ They lived by cultivating corn and durra and acting as commercial intermediaries between the Oromo and Mocha of the plateau and the Anyuua on the plains.² Almost entirely on the Sudan side, southwest of the Anyuua and frequently raided by them, are the primarily pastoral Beir, otherwise known as the Murle.³

History of Ethio-Sudanese Relations

Both Ethiopia and the Sudan as we know them today are largely creations of the nineteenth century. This does not mean that there were no contacts between the two regions in earlier centuries; only that the territorial entities involved were different. The relations were between the predecessors of present-day Ethiopia and the Sudan - Aksum, Zagwe, and the Abyssinian kingdom on the one side; Meroë, the Christian kingdoms, Sennar, the Egyptian Sudan and the Mahdist state on the other. Relations between Aksum and Meroë were characterized more by warfare than commerce, and an Aksumite military campaign to Meroë in the early 4th century A.D. is believed to have dealt the final blow to that tottering

1. Jack Stauder, The Majangir (Cambridge, 1971), p. 1.

2. Michel, loc.cit.; SIR 332, Mar. 1922.

3. M.H. Logan, "The Beirs", SNR, I (1918), pp. 238-248; B.A. Lewis, The Murle: Red Chiefs and Black Commoners (Oxford, 1972), pp. 19-23; cf. Bender, pp. 26-30.

kingdom.¹ After the conversion of the Aksumite rulers to Christianity in the same century, Egypt, by virtue of the fact that the bishop for the Ethiopian church was sent from Alexandria, came to assume a special significance in the history of Christianity in the country. There were too relations of reasonable continuity between Christian Aksum and its co-religious kingdoms in the Sudan - Nobatia, Makuria and Alodia, particularly the last mentioned. In the 10th century, George, "King of Nubia", successfully intervened to persuade the Alexandrian patriarchate to respond to the desperate pleas of the Aksumite kings for a bishop.²

The contacts between Sennar and Gondar, commercial or hostile, were more durable. While one would not venture to broach once more the vexed question of Funj origins, one would perhaps indicate the strong case that has been made for an Ethiopian origin.³ Decades of struggle for the borderland, which was rich in commercial products like gold and slaves, culminated in the abortive

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1. Sergew Hable Sellassie, Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History (Addis Ababa, 1972), pp. 91-92; Taddesse Tamrat, Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527 (Oxford, 1972), p. 21; L.P. Kirwan, "An Ethiopian-Sudanese Frontier Zone in Ancient History", GJ, vol. 138 (Dec. 1972). Cf. A.J. Arkell, A History of the Sudan (London, 1955), pp. 171-3.
 2. Sergew, pp. 177-78, 193-94, 208, 223-25; Taddesse, pp. 29-30, 41; Arkell, History, p. 190.
 3. To cite all the pertinent literature would be tedious. A summing up of the arguments is found in P.M. Holt, "The Coming of the Funj", Studies in the History of the Near East (London, 1973), pp. 67-87. Jay Spaulding, in "The Funj: A Reconsideration", JAH, XIII, 1 (1972), pp. 39-53, suggests a new, Nubian, hypothesis.

invasion of Sennar undertaken by Emperor Iyasu II (1730-55) in 1744. The Ethiopian force was defeated. Fazughli continued to be the southeastern outpost of the Funj kingdom.¹

The advent of Egyptian power to the Sudan in the early nineteenth century posed a greater menace to Ethiopia. Trade continued, particularly via Matamma. But the border skirmishes also assumed greater intensity. Twice, invading Egyptian forces were routed deep in the Ethiopian plateau: at the battles of Gundet (1875) and Gura (1876). The resurgence of imperial authority in Gondar embodied by Tewodros has itself been viewed as a Christian response to the Muslim challenge that Muhammad Ali's Egypt represented.² In the southeast, in the Fazughli region, Egyptian expansion encountered less organized power to check it.³ Fazughli was occupied towards the end of 1821 and became the centre of Egyptian influence in the sa'id. Gold was the overriding

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1. R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding, Kingdoms of the Sudan (London, 1974), pp. 57-60, 90-92; Merid Wolde Aregay, and Sergew Hable Sellassie, "Sudanese-Ethiopian Relations Before the Nineteenth Century", Sudan in Africa, pp. 62-72.
 2. Mordechai Abir, Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes (London, 1968), chs. V and VI.
 3. In 1876, Minilik wrote to Khedive Ismail to complain about reports of an Egyptian thrust from the White Nile to the Oromo and Gurage country and sent an European emissary "to express to you [Ismail] my apprehension, to extend to you my good wishes to the Egyptian people, and to conclude a treaty of friendship". Quoted in Zewde Gabre-Sellassie, The Process of Re-Unification of the Ethiopian Empire, 1868-1889, D.Phil. thesis (Oxford, 1971), p. 569.

which Yohannes operated in his dealings with the Amhar. Richard Caulk, "Yohannes IV, the Mediator, and the colonial partition of north-east Africa", Frankfurt Journal of History, 1, no. 2 (July, 1971), pp. 24-32.

continued over

pre-occupation of the conquerors, and their entire administrative and military machinery was geared towards the speedy acquisition of as much of the precious commodity as possible - by technical means as well as through tribute-gathering expeditions scarcely distinguishable from raids. Up to 4000 lbs. of gold were said to have been collected annually from Bela Shangul, Khomosha, and the neighbouring district of Keili in the early 1880s.¹

Thus, Mahdism as a revolt against Turco-Egyptian rule was bound to - and did - strike a chord in the sa'id. Unfortunately, much of the study of Ethio-Sudanese relations during the Mahdiyya has focussed on the northern, i.e. Matamma, front - a reflection to a large extent of the availability of sources.² While there is no doubt

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1. Juan Maria Schuver, "Reisen im oberen Nilgebiet", Petermanns Mittheilungen, XVI, no. 72 (Gotha, 1884), p. 3; Herbert Weld-Blundell, "A Journey through Abyssinia to the Nile", GJ, XV (1900), p. 116. Cf. Atieb, pp. 12-13, 24; Triulzi, "Trade, Islam", pp. 57-58; Marno, p. 69. G. Beltrame, Il Sennaar e lo Sciangallah (Verona, 1879), and L.G. Massaia, I miei trentacinque anni di missione nell'Alta Etiopia (Roma, 1885), II, in The Opening of the Nile Basin, ed. Elias Toniolo and Richard Hill (London, 1974), pp. 207-18 and 220-48 respectively, also give eyewitness accounts of Egyptian exactions in the sa'id. I am grateful to Prof. Richard Hill for giving me access to the manuscript copy of the work which he has co-edited. See also J.M. Schuver, "Von Cairo nach Fadasa", Petermanns Mittheilungen, vol. 28 (Gotha, 1882), p. 3, for the refusal of Mahmud of Khomosha to pay tribute to the Egyptians.
 2. P.M. Holt, The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1970), pp. 166-74, 222, 227-29; G.N. Sanderson, "Conflict and Co-operation between Ethiopia and the Mahdist State, 1884-98", SNR, L (1969), pp. 15-40; Muhammad Said al-Qaddal, Al-Mahdiyya wa-l-Habasha (Khartoum, 1973); Hiruy Walda Sillasse, Etiopia-na Matamma: Ya-Ase Yohannes Tarik Bachiru (Addis Ababa, 1910 EC); and, for the international context within which Yohannes operated in his dealings with the Ansar, Richard Caulk, "Yohannes IV, the Mahdists, and the colonial partition of north-east Africa", Transafrican Journal of History, I, no. 2 (July, 1971), pp. 23-42.

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that it was the developments on the Matamma front that had an enduring impact on the future course of both Sudanese and Ethiopian history, the events in the Bela Shangul region cannot be ignored. In October 1888, a fierce battle was fought at Gute Dili deep inside Ethiopian territory and the Ansar were defeated by a force led by Ras Gobana, Minilik's famed general.¹ In the sa'id itself, the initial enthusiasm of the rulers for the Mahdiyya turned sour as the Khalifa's amil, Khalil, imposed the jizya (the poll-tax traditionally levied from non-Muslims) on the population and followed a policy of jiḥād towards Jote Tullu, the Oromo ruler to the south, thereby jeopardizing long-standing commercial links. In the face of the growing widespread opposition, the Ansar withdrew from the sa'id, leaving Tur al-Guri of Bela Shangul to establish his hegemony in the region. Throughout the 1890s, he persisted in his defiance of the Khalifa's authority. British intelligence officers, anxiously probing the outer perimeters of the Mahdist state, continued to record his activities with avid regularity.²

Footnote continued from previous page.

See also Zewde Gabre-Sellassie, Yohannes IV of Ethiopia (Oxford, 1975), pp. 203-05, 238-49.

1. Even Gabra Sillasse, Minilik's chronicler, generally so reticent on western Ethiopian developments, records this battle: Tarika Zaman za-Dagmawi Minilik (Addis Ababa, 1959 EC), p. 150; cf. Triulzi, "Trade, Islam", p. 68.
2. Atieb, pp. 24-34; Triulzi, "Trade, Islam", pp. 61-70; Bakura Sion Tilahun, Ya-Asosa Beni Shangul Awraja Gizat Tarik (Addis Ababa, 1961), Amharic mss. at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, pp. 18-19; SIR 10 (Jan. 1893), 18 (Sept. 1893), 25 (Apr. 1894), 28 (July 1894), 53 (Apr. & May 1897). See Michel, pp. 307-308, for a Mahdist party that had strayed as far south as and was trapped in the Baro basin, and whose raids allegedly weakened the Anyuua and facilitated Nuer expansion into their territory.

Of great interest is the way in which the sa'id rulers tried to use external power - first the Mahdists, later the Abyssinians to fortify their local position vis-à-vis their rivals. Tur al-Guri was thus able to extend his power as far as Fazughli in the north and Fadasi in the south with the blessing of the Mahdists. In 1886, Mahmud Muhammad of Khomosha is said to have instigated Amir Khalil, the commander of the Ansar forces in the region, to attack and destroy Aqoldi and take its ruler, al-Hasan, and his son, Khojali, as prisoners to Omdurman. Al-Hasan died in prison; Khojali returned with a vow of revenge. The Ansar attack on Bela Shangul in 1889, when Tur al-Guri was forced to flee to Mandi, was facilitated by Muhammad Ahmad al-Khannagi of Beldidino, who in 1885 had accompanied Tur al-Guri to Omdurman to swear allegiance. The alliance that Tur al-Guri tried to forge with Khojali al-Hasan and Muhammad Wad Mahmud (who had meanwhile succeeded his father in Khomosha) in 1891 was short-lived. It foundered on their lack of a common policy towards Beshir, and Tur al-Guri's attack on Fadasi.¹ Khojali's policy of currying favour with the Abyssinians seems to date from this period.²

Shawan Expansion

While the Mahdist revolution was rocking Sudanese society to its foundations and leaving a lasting

1. See below, p. 186.

2. Arkell Papers, pp. 2, 3-5.

imprint on its future development, a process of equally, if not more, momentous significance was taking place in Ethiopia. This was the expansion under Minilik of the Shawan state from a relatively small kingdom to a far-flung empire. The process was started by Minilik's predecessors, particularly Nigus Sahle Sillasse. But it assumed enormous dimensions only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1896, the year of the Ethiopian victory over the Italians at Adwa, Minilik's empire had come to include the Harar emirate in the east, Arussi (which only submitted after a period of determined resistance), the Gibe kingdoms, Wallamo, Illubabor, and the Laqa principalities of Qellam and Naqamte. The character of Shawan expansion broadly followed two patterns: those (like Arussi, Wallamo, and later Kafa) who put up strong resistance to the invading force suffered a great deal of devastation, enslavement, and direct Shawan rule; on the other hand, those (like the Gibe states and the Leqa Oromo rulers of Naqamte and Qellam) who submitted peacefully were largely spared the depredations that often accompanied Shawan expansion, and imperial control was exerted through traditional rulers. Jote Tullu was thus made a dajazmach and used Shawan expansion to consolidate his own hegemony in southwestern Wallaga. In the Gore region as well, Ras (then Dajach) Tassamma extended his sway with the collaboration of Bungul Wachila, whose traditional authority was left untouched as a reward, while more defiant leaders like Fatansa perished in

jail.¹ In Gumay, which gave in without a fight in 1882, Tassamma left its ruler, Abba Jobir, in power and married his daughter, Balatshachaw. Abba Wagga of Bunno, favoured with the title of fitawrari, campaigned with Tassama in border regions and was later appointed over Gimira. Another balabat, Tokkon of Bure, also rose to the rank of fitawrari and played an important role as Gore's agent among the Anyuaa.²

A legitimate distinction can be drawn between the phases of Minilik's expansion before and after 1889, the year of his coronation as nigusa nagast. The former was largely dictated by the internal dynamics of Shawan history: the mastery of trade routes, new lands for settlement, and quasi-historical justifications. The latter phase was much more in reaction to European colonialism. However, the distinction, while broadly valid, should not be over-stressed. The external element (British) was significant in Minilik's drive to Harar in 1887, just as the conquest of the sa'id in 1897 had as much to do with its intrinsically valuable gold as with forestalling British colonialism. But the Gambella region and Mocha were annexed and Ethiopian flags planted at Nasser and on the Nile-Sobat junction concurrently with the Bonchamps mission to Fashoda.³ When, in 1898,

1. Birhanu Dibaba, A Historical Study of Trade in North-Eastern Illubabor and South-Western Wallaga (ca. 1900-35), B.A. dissertation (HSIU, 1973), pp. 1-2.

2. O.I. (Taye, Makurya).

3. Michel, pp. 282-286, 301, 310, 401-2.

Minilik sent five major expeditions to the south and west, the European factor, according to a letter to the Khalifa, was uppermost in Minilik's mind: "Look out for yourself and the Europeans not to enter between us, be strong, lest if the Europeans entered amongst us we will fall into a great trouble and there will be no rest for our children."¹ Even after making allowance for the dissimulation for which Minilik has become so famous, the statement expresses the major consideration behind the post-1889 phase of Minilik's expansion.

Ras Makonnin, the emperor's cousin, led the expedition to the Bela Shangul region with the implicit or explicit sanction of the Khalifa himself. The rulers of the region forgot their differences and rallied behind Tur al-Guri to present a united stand against Makonnin. But Khojali al-Hasan played a delicate and dangerous game of triple loyalties to the Khalifa, his fellow sheikhs, and the invading force. After putting up a valiant, if lonesome, fight, even managing to beat Makonnin's force in an earlier battle, Tur al-Guri was defeated and forced to flee. A subsequent follow-up operation by Dajach Damiss not only extended the campaign up to Fazughli but also resulted in the capture of both Tur al-Guri and Muhammad Wad Mahmud of Khomosha. Khojali enjoyed a brief period of freedom before he was also detained on charges of encouraging mass migration to the Sudan and of making secret contacts with the British, who by September 1898 had reached Roseires on the Blue Nile.²

1. CRD Mahdia 1/34/12, English translation, n.d.

2. Bakura Sion, pp. 19-21; Atieb, pp. 36-41.

The International Setting

Both the Mahdist state in the Sudan and the expanding Shewan state had to contend with the imperial ambitions of the colonial powers, particularly those of Italy and Britain. Indeed, the Mahdist period in the Sudan represented a significant break between Turco-Egyptian domination and British colonial rule; it was a period when the Sudan and Ethiopia faced each other - once again - as indigenous African polities. As the century came to a close, their relative independence vis-à-vis the colonial powers shrank progressively. In 1891, Italy and Britain signed two protocols delimiting their spheres of influence in North East Africa. In essence, the protocols confirmed Italian claims to a protectorate over Ethiopia and British claims to be the guardian of Egyptian interests in the Sudan.¹ Minilik's famous circular, in which he staked out his own territorial claims, came six days after the second protocol, and was as much an assertion of Ethiopian independence as a bid to participate in the "scramble for Africa". Minilik also began to follow a policy of steadfastly cultivating French and Russian support as a counterweight to the Anglo-Italian understanding.² It is perhaps no accident that the French were able to acquire their greatest prize in Ethiopia,

1. A&P, vol. 49 (1891), C. 6316.

2. Richard Caulk, The Origins and Development of the Foreign Policy of Menelik II, 1865-1896, Ph.D. thesis (London, 1966), pp. 354, 364, 378-79.

the concession for the Addis Ababa-Jibouti railway, at this time. Minilik's relation with the Khalifa was also marked by a spirit of détente, especially after his victory at Adwa in 1896.¹

Adwa shattered Anglo-Italian calculations. The British were shaken from their smug confidence in Italy's capacity to act as a watchdog over Ethiopia and prevent French expansion in that quarter. Their interests on the Nile, which they thought had been conveniently assured, were once more threatened.² A number of historians have observed the connection between the Italian disaster at Adwa and the order to Kitchener to march on Dongola, which, according to Rennell Rodd, came "like a bolt from the blue".³ British intelligence sources were also seriously worried about the possibility of an alliance between Minilik and the Khalifa.⁴ Rodd himself was entrusted with the diplomatic counterpart of the military strategy that was being executed by Kitchener: he led a mission to Minilik with the declared objective of securing,

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1. Caulk, p. 384; Sanderson, "Conflict and Co-operation", pp. 28 ff.; Holt, The Mahdist State, pp. 227-29.
 2. L. Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa (London, 1920), p. 189.
 3. Holt, The Mahdist State, p. 223; Caulk, Foreign Policy of Minilik, p. 386; G.N. Sanderson, England, Europe and the Upper Nile, 1882-1899 (Edinburgh, 1965), pp. 243-49; Harold G. Marcus, "Imperialism and Expansionism in Ethiopia from 1865 to 1900", Colonialism in Africa, ed. L.H. Gann & Peter Duignan, I (Cambridge, 1969), p. 439; R. Robinson & J. Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians (London, 1961), pp. 346-48; Muddathir Abd al-Rahim, Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan (Oxford, 1969), p. 24.
 4. SIR 50, Aug-Dec 1896.

"if possible, the friendly neutrality of the Abyssinians, who after their recent successes against the Italians had become a power to reckon with in a vast area coterminous with the Sudan".¹ Minilik was not only dissuaded from concluding the dreaded alliance with the Khalifa, but also persuaded to sign a treaty of friendship with the British, to declare the Mahdists to be "the enemies of his Empire", and to agree to bar the passage of arms to the Sudan.²

Minilik's denunciation of the Khalifa was scarcely more than verbal. Nor did he bother to keep his pledge to the French made even prior to the Anglo-Ethiopian treaty of 1897 to aid them in their mission to the Nile to link up with the Marchand mission.³ But it remains true that Adwa, as much as it assured the political independence of Ethiopia, hastened the British conquest of the Sudan. And thus was formed the framework for the relations between the two countries. The juxtaposition of what for all practical purposes was an European colony (although the fiction persisted that the Sudan was an Anglo-Egyptian condominium) and an Ethiopia

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1. Rennell Rodd, Social and Diplomatic Memories, 2nd series, 1894-1901 (London, 1923), p. 110. Lt. Col. Gleichen, who accompanied Rodd, put the mission's purpose more bluntly as being to dampen Ethiopian euphoria after Adwa, remind them about Maqdala and restore British prestige tainted by association with Italy. With the Mission to Menelik, 1897 (London, 1898), p. 4.
 2. Rodd, pp. 112, 114, 171; A&P, vol. 54 (1898), C. 8715.
 3. Harold G. Marcus, The Life and Times of Menelik II (Oxford, 1975), pp. 178-81; G.N. Sanderson, "Emir Suleyman Ibn Inger Abdullah", SNR, vol. 35, part I (June 1954), p. 63.

formally independent but economically under the shadow of the same forces of world imperialism - this was the new pattern of Ethio-Sudanese relations, so different from the days of Aksum and Meroë, Zagwe and Nubia, Sennar and Gondar, and al-Mahdiyya wa-l-Habasha. It was to some extent presaged by the period of Turco-Egyptian rule in the Sudan in the nineteenth century. But the forces that propelled British imperialism were much stronger than those which acted on its Egyptian predecessor; after all, the former ultimately swallowed Muhammad Ali's Egypt, or what remained of it.

Viewed in historical perspective, therefore, Adwa did not so much herald Ethiopian independence as it did a new form of dependence. Ethiopia became one of the earliest prototypes of neo-colonial dependence (as opposed to outright colonial dependence) in Africa. The fact that it did not so easily and so quickly become the fully-fledged neo-colony that it now is has more to do with the backward nature of its socio-economic system than with any lack of effort or desire on the part of European powers. For, as one writer put it, "imperialism was as much a function of its victims' collaboration or non-collaboration - of their indigenous politics, as it was of European expansion".¹ A fully developed comprador class in Ethiopia serving the interests of imperialism is a very recent phenomenon, although men like Nagadras Hayla

1. R. Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration", Studies in the Theory of Imperialism, ed. Roger Owen & Bob Sutcliffe (London, 1972), p. 118.

Giyorgis and Ras Tafari (later Emperor Haile Sellassie) could perhaps be said to have foreshadowed it.

The new strategy of imperialism for Ethiopia was thus economic penetration, as distinct from outright annexation or physical occupation - the expansion of markets for European goods, the acquisition of financial monopolies (i.e. banking) and concessions over primary products, and the building of railways and roads. The French built the vital railway linking the capital with the outside world. The British controlled the Bank of Abyssinia, which from its inception in 1905 continued as an appendage of the Bank of Egypt. As the rector of the University of Vienna articulated the new strategy in his inaugural speech, "In order ... that the great natural riches of Abyssinia may be thrown open to European trade and industry, there is no need of a war, or of a costly establishment of sovereignty over the land."¹ More than thirty years later, an Ethiopian writer described his country as a battleground of rival European commercial interests.² Another Ethiopian, in a recently published work, also indicated the restrictions on Ethiopian independence, especially in external trade and the import of arms. His appraisal of the role consuls played in the whole process, coming from someone who himself worked in more than one British consulate in Ethiopia before the Fascist invasion, is particularly apt. Over and above the

1. Leo Reinisch, "Egypt and Abyssinia", GJ, IX (1897), pp. 317.

2. Acheber Gabré-Hiôt, La verité sur l'Ethiopie (Lausanne, 1931), pp. 5-6.

normal functions of arbitration and commercial advice, consuls in Ethiopia carried out works of essential political and military intelligence.¹ The conduct of the two British consuls at Gore in this period, Walker and Erskine, who acted as if they were governors of the province, amply bears out this observation.

In the eyes of the British, Ethiopia's fate, particularly that of western Ethiopia, was thus very much linked with that of the Sudan. Western Ethiopia was in other words seen as a Sudanese hinterland potentially more profitable than the Sudan itself. "If we compare these frontier lands [of western Ethiopia] with the Sudan proper," so wrote Weld-Blundell, explorer and concessionaire, "I do not think it would be too much to say that there is more hope of prosperity and trade development immediately outside the Sudan than in it. The climate, soil, population, the capabilities of that great rich region of Galla land that has lately fallen under the dominion of Abyssinia, will some day prove a great accession, not only to the wealth of Abyssinia, but to bordering countries."² In 1913, urging the need for the recruitment of young officials with the knowledge of Amharic to the Sudan Political Service, Thesiger, the British representative in Addis Ababa, wrote: "the future of the Sudan and Abyssinia must be so closely linked that whether we consider it

2. See below, pp. 405-7.

1. Hiywat Hidaru, Yachi Qan Tarassach (Addis Ababa, 1975), pp. 12-13; O.I. (Majid).

2. "A Journey through Abyssinia to the Nile", GJ, XV (1900), p. 118.

from the commercial or political point of view, this need of officials speaking Amharic and having a knowledge of Abyssinia must increase with every year that passes."¹ A few years later, some financial circles were to put the whole matter in an even broader, i.e. North East African, perspective and wax lyrical about the special destiny of Britain, as the ruler of adjoining colonies, to play a more energetic role in the economics and politics of Ethiopia.² Therein lay the particular significance of the Gambella trading post, which was conceived as an effective means of drawing western Ethiopia into the economic orbit of British-ruled Sudan. Economic penetration would pave the way for political influence, or even control.³ All this did not mean that military occupation of the country was ruled out. On the contrary, elaborate and meticulous route reports and possible lines of attack were compiled.⁴ But they all remained in the realms of strict contingency.

The supreme importance of the 1906 tripartite agreement between Britain, France and Italy was therefore that it formalized the practices of economic imperialism in Ethiopia. It was at the same time a recognition of the futility or even the undesirability of military conquest

1. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Tilley, 25.4.13.

2. See below, pp. 405-7.

3. Cf. A.H. Hapkemeyer, Die Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des English-Ägyptischen Sudan, Ph.D. thesis (Hamburg, 1921), p. 178.

4. E.g. FO 141/393, Cromer to Harrington, 4.12.05.; Milne to DI (Egypt), 17.11.05.

and a manifesto of economic exploitation in amicable partnership and mutual respect. More than two-thirds of the 11 articles of the agreement are concerned with regulating the issues relating to the French railway concession. The agreement has been seen as an act of commitment by the powers to maintain the integrity and independence of Ethiopia (as is professed in article 1 of the agreement), and it has even been compared to the famous Belgian treaty of 1839.¹ But it can scarcely be seen as an act of positive commitment; it was a convenient compromise solution to avert the annexation of the country by any one power and the consequent jeopardy of the interests of the other two. It was designed to serve as a permanent antidote to Minilik's known tactics of playing off one power against another.² The danger of competition from a fourth power, Germany, which in 1905 sent an impressive mission to Minilik, was an additional incentive to the three powers to conclude the agreement.³ Coming two years after the 1904 Anglo-French entente, it was also as much a reflection of European diplomacy as an outcome of the Ethiopian reality. Its antecedent, the preliminary agreement of 19th December, 1903, had excluded

1. Woolf, pp. 218-19; cf. Harold Marcus, "A Preliminary History of the Tripartite Treaty of December 13, 1906", JES, II (July 1964), p. 40; Life and Times, pp. 212-13.

2. FO 141/422, Hervey report, 31.12.08.

3. A. Montell, "Abyssinie: L'accord franco-anglo-italien", Revue Française, XXXII (1907), p. 18. See GFM 14/13, Coates to Bullow, 12.2.07., and memo. entitled "Abessinien", 16.7.09., for German reactions to the agreement.

France and was signed by Britain and Italy only.¹ As it turned out, in the delimitation of spheres of influence in the 1906 agreement, it was Italy, with only a dubious guarantee of a territorial connection between its colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland, that lost more than . . . France.²

The Italians, with memories of the protectorate that had seemed so much within their grasp a decade before, were least prepared to renounce the whole idea of partition. British policy changed with the official and the time. In March 1907, Colonel Harrington, British minister in Addis Ababa, was trying to hush up Italian plans for a secret partition agreement, but he could not bring himself to reject the Italian overtures altogether.³ Wingate, the governor-general of the Sudan, was more unequivocal in 1911, saying that "even if Abyssinia should relapse into a state of internecine warfare on the death of the Emperor Menelek, the soundest attitude for Great Britain to adopt would be a 'hands off' policy".⁴ Major Doughty-Wylie, the chargé d'affaires in Addis Ababa, appeared equally forthright a year later: "It would seem to our interest, if we wish to avoid further distant and difficult administration, to maintain an undivided Abyssinia

1. FO 1/48, encl. in Bertie to Lansdowne, 19.12.03.; Marcus, Life and Times, pp. 206-07.

2. Marcus, Life and Times, p. 212; Globus, vol. 90 (1906), p. 172.

3. FO 371/191, Harrington memo., 11.3.07.

4. FO 371/1043, Wingate's note, encl. in Gorst to Grey, 9.2.11.; cf. FO 371/1571, Grey to Thesiger, 24.7.13.

so long as she refrains from forcing us to act. Reform and trade will gradually grow as they have always grown in the history of the world."¹ But such professions of disinterest did not rule out a policy of discreetly wooing rulers of the Ethio-Sudanese borderland for a prospective British take-over.² Nor did it preclude the drawing by Lord Kitchener of an elaborate scheme, complete with map, for the partition of Ethiopia among the three adjoining powers in 1913.³

The idea of partition or a protectorate (sole or tripartite) continued as the ultimate threat that every British official resorted to in his exasperation at the lack of administrative reforms. Reform your government, check the slave trade and border raids, stop the arms traffic, or else we shall be forced in the interests of civilization to deprive you of your independence - such was the refrain, explicit or implicit, of British policy in Ethiopia. The partition argument was given a fresh impetus as the First World War came to a close. Tafari himself was reported to have grown thoroughly pessimistic about the prospects for the survival of Ethiopian independence and to have started hoping for a British protectorate to avert the partition of the country.⁴ Some years later,

1. FO 371/1294, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 31.8.12.

2. See FO 371/1570, Wingate to Kitchener, 29.1.13.; FO 141/146, encl. in Wingate to Graham, 10.10.08, for an interesting conversation between Dajach Siyum (later Ras Haylu), hereditary ruler of Gojam, and C.H. Armstrong, junior inspector of the Sudan government.

3. FO 371/1571, Kitchener to Grey, 29.5.13.

4. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, 3.7.17.

a patriotic contributor to Birhanina Salam, the Amharic weekly, denounced those preaching that Ethiopia could modernize only as a protectorate as wolves in sheep's clothing, and made an impassioned plea to his compatriots to defend the independence that their forefathers had paid for with their blood.¹

In 1918, the British were considering various schemes for the partition of the country. One of these envisaged the division of the country roughly along the line of the Rift Valley, with the western half including Eritrea falling to the British and the eastern half including the railway to Italy; the French were to be bought out of Jibouti.² Such an arrangement would have given the British the security over the Nile basin that had always dominated their policy in Ethiopia. It would moreover, so it was believed erroneously, neatly divide the country into Abyssinia proper in the west, and Oromo and Somali in the east. The abandonment of the railway so lightly was explained as a magnanimous gesture that the British could well afford: "The British Empire is rich enough already to forego acquiring isolated assets here and there, however valuable they may be in themselves. That is a policy for powers which have come late in the race, like Italy."³

The second scheme also excluded France, "whose

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1. B.S., 1.10.31. of the above nature, which was
 2. FO 371/3126, memo on report of Committee on Territorial Exchanges, n.d.
 3. Ibid.

interests are not vital and for whom compensation could be found in the West [i.e. West Africa?] on the principle of the consolidation of colonial interests". Then, by a supreme act of self-sacrifice, Britain would let Italy establish a protectorate over practically the whole of Ethiopia. But "our interests in Gojam with the outlet of Lake Tsana and in the provinces South of the Abai and West of the Omo river can never be given up. These provinces are vital to the future welfare of the Sudan and our claims to them can never be renounced". Moreover, the scheme assumed that Britain would be justified in requesting an Italian cession of Eritrea in return for the consolidation of Italian interests over Somaliland and Ethiopia. If the scheme encountered strong French opposition, the alternative would be partition, Britain getting western Ethiopia, i.e. Gojam, the Oromo areas west of the Gibe (including Jimma Abba Jifar), the sa'id, the Baro basin, and Kafa. Then the celebrated policy of indirect rule would come into force: "If we had Ras Hailu in Gojjam, Dejaz. Gabri Egierher [i.e. Gabra Egziabher or Kumsa] in Nehempti [i.e. Naqamte] and Ras Taffari in Gore we should have a very strong combination in our favour, and it would be easy to govern the country through them"; Ras Tafari was believed to prefer British to Italian protection and to have been toying with the idea of converting Gore into a personal fief.¹

Schemes of the above nature, while important to

1. DUR 295/10, Notes on Abyssinia, 1918; see below, p. 285.

help us discern the priorities of imperial powers, more particularly of Britain, in Ethiopia, had in themselves only episodic significance. Less episodic, if in the final analysis no less chimerical, was the British pre-occupation with Lake Tana, which, according to a memorandum of 1926, "has governed the policy of His Majesty's Government for the past thirty years".¹ The otherwise clear-headed and articulate Harold MacMichael, for long civil secretary in Khartoum, was at a loss to pinpoint the aims of British policy in Ethiopia, which justified "the importance of our mission & the size of our legation & the bulkiness of our files" - except, that is, for Tana.²

By the 1902 treaty, which delimited the boundary between Ethiopia and the Sudan, Minilik had promised "not to construct, or allow to be constructed, any work across the Blue Nile, Lake Tsana, or the Sobat, which would arrest the flow of their waters into the Nile except in agreement with His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of the Soudan".³ Decades of British diplomacy thereafter strove to convert this rather negative or preventive definition of interests into an even stronger pledge from Ethiopia to let the British construct a dam on Lake Tana to regulate the flow of the Blue Nile to the Sudan. First, they tried to tighten the 1902 commitment

1. FO 371/11564, encl. in Chamberlain to Maclean, 21.7.28.; cf. US 884.00/99, Southard to sec. of st., 22.4.19.

2. SA DT 387.7, MacMichael to Schuster, 30.10.30.

3. A&P, vol. 76 (1902), cd. 1370.

by offering an annual subvention of £10,000 to Minilik and his successors "so long as the present friendly relations between the two Governments continue".

Minilik was wary of accepting the offer, and the arrangement came to nothing.¹ Negotiations were suspended until 1914 when the British chargé d'affaires in Addis Ababa took the initiative to negotiate a treaty for acquiring an option to build a reservoir on Tana. Again, the negotiations were inconclusive; the major stumbling block appears to have been Ethiopian concern that raising the levels of the lake would result in the flooding of nearby monasteries.²

The next phase of the Tana negotiations started in 1922, when British cotton interests with a stake in the expansion of the Gezira scheme in the Sudan put pressure on their government to conclude an agreement as soon as possible. The importance attached to obtaining the concession can be gauged from the fact that the payment offered Ras Tafari (who then represented the Ethiopian government), amounted to £50,000 on the signature of the agreement, £150,000 on the completion of the dam, and an annual rent of £30,000 thereafter. Tana was also one of the most important items discussed when Tafari met Ramsay Macdonald, the British prime minister, during the former's

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1. FO 141/409, Cromer to Clerk, 7.3.07., 18.4.07.; Clerk to Cromer, 16.2.07., 2.5.07.; FO 141/423, Gorst to Wingate, 26.1.09.; FO 371/10872, memo on history of Tana negotiations, 24.3.25.
 2. FO 371/10872, memo on history of Tana negotiations, 24.3.25.; FO 371/1880, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 15.5.14., 20.7.14., 9.8.14.; Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 26.9.14.

European tour in 1924. Macdonald subsequently wrote to Tafari suggesting that he appoint an engineer from a "neutral" body such as the United States or the League of Nations, and on his favourable recommendation undertake the construction of the dam, "which would be operated for the benefit of the Sudan Government". The expenses of the engineer were to be paid by the Ethiopian government from the annual payments that the Sudan government was going to make on the conclusion of the agreement. Tafari's reply poured cold water on British hopes of getting "something out of the Abyssinians before the good effect of their visit to England had been completely effaced". He changed the whole character of the negotiations by saying that the Ethiopian government will build the dam "in its own interest and for all other purposes" and then rent "the surplus waters of the said lake" to the Sudan. Moreover, he refused to specify the engineer to be chosen, or to agree to the one year deadline for the completion of the survey suggested by Macdonald. Such frustration of repeated British initiatives to acquire the concession that they coveted so much and for so long formed the background for the Anglo-Italian agreement of 1925, by which Britain renounced its economic interests in western Ethiopia in favour of Italy in return for the latter's diplomatic support in acquiring the concession. For it was felt that "only with Italian collaboration can we hope to overcome Abyssinian resistance".¹ The quest

1. FO 371/10872, memo on history of Tana negotiations, 24.3.25.; FO 371/11564, encl. in Chamberlain to Maclean

for Tana persisted, in one form or another, for over a decade after that. But it remained a dream, a will-o'-the-wisp of British imperial policy.

A Survey of Ethiopian Society, c. 1900-1935

A discussion of Ethiopian history of the first three or four decades of this century is handicapped by the absence of comprehensive historical reconstructions. What follows can therefore be taken only as a highly tentative attempt to outline the general historical context for the developments in western Ethiopia that are examined in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

From the point of view of political developments, the period between Adwa and the Fascist invasion of 1935 can be roughly divided into three phases: 1896-1906, 1906-30, 1930-35. The years between 1896 and 1906 can be seen as a period during which Minilik consolidated his Adwa victory. It was at this time that Minilik concluded most of his important treaties with foreign countries. The Italians renounced their protectorate claim in October 1896. A treaty of friendship with France was signed in March, 1897, and with the British about two

Footnote continued from previous page.

21.7.26.; see FO 371/1572 for rather acrimonious exchanges between Rome and London on the conflicting issues of British interests in the Tana region and Italian territorial connection between Eritrea and Somaliland, both guaranteed by the 1906 agreement.

months later. Then followed the Americans (1903), the Germans (1905), and the Austrians (1905). By the end of the period, too, only Ethiopia's southern boundary with the then British East Africa remained to be delimited. By 1906, Minilik's extension of his frontiers had thus been for all practical purposes completed and Ethiopia had come to assume more or less its present shape. Moreover, 1906 is important not only because it was the year in which the three powers most interested in the fate of Ethiopia finally managed to settle their conflicting ambitions and interests in the country, but also because it was at this time that the emperor suffered the first stroke that heralded his lingering death. It thus marked the end of the period of his effective rule. The death of his right-hand man, Ras Makonnin, in the same year further heightened the significance of the emperor's illness. The removal of the two most powerful figures from the political arena dramatically altered the nature of groupings and alliances within the ruling class.

The second phase is the logical outcome of these events, in particular of the incapacitation of the emperor. It can be described as one long interregnum when the ruling class was rent by internal contradictions, when the Shewan hegemony that Minilik had built with such consummate skill had to withstand the stress of more than one regional challenges. These were the years when the European legations lamented with tiresome regularity the absence of effective government in Addis Ababa, and drew up contingency plans - ranging from strong fences for

their legations to elaborate partition schemes - in anticipation of the inexorable disintegration of the empire. The ailing emperor tried to provide for the future by taking two significant steps in 1907 and 1908 - the institution of ministerial government and the designation of his grandson, Lij Iyasu, as heir to the throne, respectively. The announcement of a council of ministers had only symbolic significance, for power continued to be dependent on personal influence and military strength. Political alliances cut across "cabinet loyalties". Even in the years after the end of Italian occupation, when Haile Sellassie emerged as the indisputable autocrat, ministers were scarcely ever more than civil functionaries, the ambitions of a Walda Giyorgis Walda Yohannes and an Aklilu Habta Wald notwithstanding. The significance of the beginning of ministerial government in 1907 lay in that it heralded the ascendancy of the bureaucratic wing of the state apparatus over the military. The predatory character of Ethiopian governors and their soldiery continued for much of the period. But at the same time an incipient bureaucracy emerged on the political scene. The regime, which consolidated itself under Haile Sellassie, could be said to have been born in the period of the interregnum. The absence from the political scene of a figure of the stature of Minilik or Haile Sellassie in fact tended to give the ministers power and importance that they would not have enjoyed otherwise.¹ Thus

1. Cf. Peter Garretson, A History of Addis Ababa from its Foundation in 1886 to 1910, Ph.D. thesis (London, 1974), pp. 379-80.

Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis, who exercised considerable powers until 1916 as the most important minister for most of the time, can hardly be viewed as an ordinary civil functionary. In that year, however, he was imprisoned by Tafari on alleged links with the deposed Iyasu. The 1918 demonstration against the ministers, spearheaded by the mahal safari who were so instrumental in the coups of 1910 and 1916, is also believed to have been instigated by Tafari.¹

The period between 1906 and 1916 was marked by two serious challenges to Shewan hegemony in the empire. The first challenge came from Empress Taytu, Minilik's wife, and the Northern (i.e. Gondar, Gojam, Yajju, and Tigre) interests that she tried to represent and galvanize by, among other things, a series of matrimonial alliances. Taytu's main ambition was to nullify her husband's settlement and arrange for the succession of Zawditu, the emperor's daughter married to the empress's nephew, Ras Gugsa of Begemdir. Her political impersonation of the dying emperor gave her extra leverage in the political tussle. But her bid soon failed in the face of the formidable group ranged against her - Ras Tassamma, the governor of Gore who was made ras bitwadad and regent to

1. See Mahtama Sillasse Walda Masqal, Zikra Nagar (Addis Ababa, 1962 EC), pp. 710-18; and Mars'e Hazan Walda Qirqos, Ya-Tarik Zaman Tizitaye Ba-Nigista Nagastat Zawditu Zamana Mangist (Addis Ababa, n.d.), pp. 149-55, for details of the demonstration. It is the latter author who highlights the crucial role of the mahal safari, a term used to describe the people employed in the upkeep of the imperial court. Ibid., pp. 148-55.

the young prince in 1909; RasMikael of Wollo, Iyasu's father who had much to lose from any upsetting of Minilik's settlement; and Fitawrari Habta Giyorgis, the veteran Oromo war minister and political and military strategist extraordinary who proved more Shawan than the Shawans themselves. Taytu was gently removed from political power in March 1910.¹

The regent himself died just over a year later, leaving Iyasu to play unfettered a more and more independent role. Iyasu's politics soon managed to polarize the alliance that had forced the empress to bow down into two opposing camps, led respectively by Habta Giyorgis and Mikael. Iyasu's brief but eventful reign still remains an enigma. Pro-Tafari propaganda and the relentless vituperation of British consular officials have smeared his figure out of all recognition. But old folks still have a half-concealed admiration for Minilik's dashing and strikingly handsome successor. All the same, his performance scarcely warrants the uninhibited adulation that an extreme reaction to the official distortions has sometimes given rise to. His pro-Muslim policy can be regarded as a welcome antidote to centuries of Christian domination in a country where there were about as many Muslims as there were Christians. His appointment policy - aiming at the promotion of young and educated men

1. Marcus, Life and Times, pp. 236-45. Much interesting light is thrown on the struggle between empress and regent by Mars'e Hazan, Ba-Dagmawi Minilik Zaman Kayahutna Kasamahut (Addis Ababa, 1935 EC), pp. 46, 50-58, 62-73.

like Lij Bayana, Qañazmach Tassamma Eshate, and Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis at the expense of members of the old establishment like Habta Giyorgis, Ras Lul Sagad (Ras Tassamma's brother), and Dajach Balcha - can also be viewed as progressive.¹ Indeed Haile Sellassie later accused him of being surrounded by ya-tarta sawoch (commoners).² On the other hand, his senseless and bloody carnage of the Afar and, above all, the people of Gimira was totally inexcusable.³ What antagonized the Shawan establishment was of course his undermining of Shawan and Christian hegemony, rather than the suffering of the Afar and Gimira peoples. The displacement of Dajach Tafari from the governorship of Harar that he had inherited from his father, Ras Makonnin, preceded by the appointment of Iyasu's favourite, Hasan Ydlibi (a Syrian Christian), to the key post of nagadras of Harar and Diredawa, threw into the opposition camp a figure who, by reason of his pedigree, could enhance its legitimacy. Meanwhile, Iyasu's father, Mikael, was emerging as the most powerful figure in the north: in May 1914, he had himself crowned nigus of Wollo and Tigre. Finally, Iyasu's diplomatic overtures to Muhammad Abdille Hasan, the Somali patriot engaged in

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1. Marcus, Life and Times, pp. 268-69. See Mars'e Hazan, Minilik, pp. 100-02, 110-11, for some of the reforms introduced by Iyasu.
 2. Hiywate-na Ya-Itiyopya Irmijja, vol. I (Bath, 1929 EC), p. 26.
 3. Cf. Werner J. Lange, Gimira (Remnants of a Vanishing Culture), Ph.D. thesis (Frankfurt, 1975), pp. 22-23; Mars'e Hazan, Minilik, pp. 105, 110. Mars'e Hazan mistakenly identifies the cause of the campaign as being to subdue the Anyuua.

years of guerrilla struggle against the British, as well as his pro-Turk and pro-German leanings in World War I, alarmed the Allies into identifying their interests with those of the Shewan establishment and working assiduously for Iyasu's deposition. The coup was swiftly executed on 27 September, 1916. Iyasu was dethroned while in Harar. Zawditu was proclaimed empress, and Tafari was made heir apparent and regent. Mikael's bid to reverse the coup was squashed at the battle of Sagale on 22 October.

After 1916, no serious challenge to Shewan hegemony emerged, except briefly towards the end of the 1920s. Instead this last phase of the interregnum was marked by an internal power struggle between Tafari on the one hand and Zawditu, or rather the forces that she represented and symbolized, on the other. To counterpoise their differences as polarities of progress and tradition, foreign contacts and isolationism, may have the inherent danger of over-simplification. But there is a great deal of truth in such a contraposition. Tafari understood the overwhelming influence of the western powers and tried to adjust to as well as profit from it. He tried to strengthen his international position by proclaiming edicts against slavery and the slave trade, which were more easily decreed than enforced, and by securing the country's admission to the League of Nations in 1923. In 1924, he made a tour of Europe and the Middle East which Pankhurst has enthusiastically likened to the journey of the Russian tsar, Peter the Great, in

the 17th century.¹ Such moves were often opposed by the empress and her patrons, Habta Giyorgis and Abuna Mattewos (the Coptic archbishop), both instrumental in the Shawan coup d'état in 1916 and therefore protagonists of the post-Iyasu order. Their deaths in 1926 can be regarded as an important landmark in Tafari's growing consolidation of power. In 1928, Tafari further had himself crowned nigus.² Two years later, the battered empress died and Tafari became Haile Sellassie.

The last phase of the political history of this period thus marks the short-lived consolidation of imperial power under Haile Sellassie. Nothing probably illustrates this change of position more dramatically than the new tone of Birhanina Salam. Before Haile Sellassie's coronation, while the paper could very well be regarded as his ideological ally in his struggle against the ultra-conservative empress and her political entourage, it nevertheless exhibited a reasonable degree of independence and critical detachment. After the emperor's coronation, however, the paper adopted a tone which became only slightly removed from the unrestrained adulation of Addis Zaman in later days. The first written constitution promulgated in 1931 was a clever device by which the emperor formalized his supreme authority over

1. Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800-1935 (Addis Ababa, 1968), p. 27.

2. See Mars'e Hazan, Zawditu, pp. 415 ff., for the crucial role once again played by the mahal safari in expediting Tafari's coronation as nigus, and pp. 137-38, 179-82, for earlier abortive plots, one of them led by Hayla Giyorgis, against Tafari.

the regional masafint. The most recalcitrant of these masafint, Ras Haylu of Gojam, was effectively removed from the political scene the following year on the pretext of an alleged implication in a plot to free the imprisoned Iyasu. Ras Imru, the emperor's cousin, was appointed over the province. Other measures which were aimed at or contributed to the consolidation of the emperor's authority were the state control of the Bank of Abyssinia, the reorganization of the customs department, the expansion of the civil service, and the creation of a modern armed force through the expansion of the Imperial Body Guard, the founding of the Holata Military Academy in 1934, and the sending of young Ethiopians to France for military training. This phase also marks the first significant penetration of expatriate advisers into the budding state structure.¹

The economic basis of the political power outlined above was provided by an unremitting exploitation of the peasantry. What has come to be known as the gabbar system (after the tribute-payers, the gabbar) operated as the mechanism by which the ruling class appropriated the surplus of the peasants' produce. While the system originated in the Abyssinian kingdom, it assumed most iniquitous dimensions in the areas conquered by Minilik in the latter part of the 19th century. As the conquered peoples of southern, western, and eastern Ethiopia belonged

1. John Markakis, Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity (Oxford, 1974), pp. 202-4; Addis Hiwet, Ethiopia: From Autocracy to Revolution (London, 1975), pp. 66-68; Pankhurst, pp. 28-29.

to nationalities different from that of their conquerors, the mitigating effects of kinship or ethnic ties were lacking, and cultural oppression was coupled with economic exploitation. It is also not surprising that these same peoples of the conquered provinces - such as the Girmira and the Walamo - became the targets of the slave raids for both internal employment and export.

All conquered lands were automatically declared state property. About a third (sisso) was then given to the local balabat. Of the remaining two-thirds, a portion was retained by the crown, and the rest was granted to the conquering generals and their soldiers. Garrisons were established in these areas to consolidate the conquest and subdue any rebellions. Only a few principalities, like Jimma Abba Jiffar, Leqa Qellam and Naqamte, whose rulers had come to terms with the invading force, were spared this colonial imposition.¹ The soldiery had no regular salaries but instead appropriated the tribute from the gabbar that were due the state. The gabbar paid at least a third of his produce to his overlord, as well as the tithe (asrat) introduced in 1892. He worked two to three days a week for his master. He provided him with firewood, honey, and other such necessities, and was obliged to give him special gifts on holidays. The number of gabbar assigned to each soldier varied from place to place; sometimes it was 2, in other areas like Gore, it could go as high as 15.² Governors had several

1. Mahtama Sillasse, p. 164.

2. O.I. (Makurya); cf. Illubabor Province Educational Office, Ityopyan La-Mawaq, n.d., p. 23.

hundred gabbar. They could thus afford to exercise some degree of leniency in their treatment of their gabbar, while those of the lower officials and soldiers suffered crushing exactions. All the same, the departure of a governor and the appointment of a new one was invariably attended by an intensification of the exactions, as the old governor tried to take his last fill, and the new one sought gifts and services of appeasement. The pillage of Kafa by Ras Walda Giyorgis and his soldiers during his transfer to Gondar in 1910 has become a cause célèbre.¹ There was also a case in Qellam (Wallaga) of the inhabitants fleeing the district on the entry of a new governor for fear of the inevitable exactions.² At the beginning, what was given to the soldiery and officials was merely the right to collect tribute. But over the decades, the right of tribute was transformed into the right of tenure. In the Gore region, the process of land distribution among the conquering force was started under Dajach Ganame (1913-16) and was accelerated in the 1920s and early 30s.³

The gabbar system was a subject of bitter condemnation by most foreign observers during this period as well as by the progressive Ethiopian opinion that found expression in the columns of Birhanina Salam. A correspondent of The Times described it as "a far worse evil than slavery" and concluded that "The Abyssinian peasantry (who form the bulk of the population) are, indeed, being

1. See Mars'e Hazan, Minilik, pp. 73-4.

2. B.S., 26.7.28.; cf. Henry Darley, Slaves and Ivory (London, 1926), p. 65.

3. O.I. (Taye, Makurya, Mangiste, Walda Samayat). For further details on the gabbar system, see Markakis,

sucked dry."¹ Another observer called the rapacious and parasitic soldiers and functionaries "a blight over the countryside".² European travellers and officials in Ethiopia were struck by the similarity of the peasants' condition with that prevailing in medieval Europe and readily characterized the Ethiopian system as feudal.³ One of the Ethiopian contributors to Birhanina Salam also contrasted the existing "régime féodale" with the "régime administratif" that he espoused.⁴

The lot of the gabbar was indeed a subject of considerable concern in the Ethiopian press, ranging from Afawarq Gabra Iyasus's oblique attack on the ostentation and extravagance of the nobility⁵ to Asba's moving and graphic description of the gabbar's condition.⁶ Three

Footnote 3 continued from previous page.

pp. 108-18; Addis Hiwet, pp. 30-38; Michael Stahl, Ethiopia: Political Contradictions in Agricultural Development (Uppsala, 1974), pp. 45-47. Two illustrative cases in Shawa are cited by Mars'e Hazan, Ya-Zaman Tarik Tizitaye Ba-Abeto Iyasu Zamana Mangist (Addis Ababa, 1938 EC), pp. 17-18.

1. The Times, 18.4.31.

2. L.F.I. Athill, "Through South-Western Abyssinia to the Nile", GJ, LVI (1920), p. 352; cf. CRO BNP 1/62/434, Lush memo, 1932; RH Mss Brit Emp S22/G276, Sandford, 16.10.41.

3. Cf. Michel, p. 469; M. Boucoiran, "La situation économique de l'Ethiopie, 1913-1917", Renseignements Coloniaux, no. 11 (1918), pp. 180-81.

4. B.S., 13.5.26.

5. B.S., 25.7.29.

6. B.S., 21.7.27., reproduced at length in English in Addis Hiwet, pp. 71-73; cf. B.S., 16.5.29.

months after it started circulation, Birhanina Salam posed a question to its readers on the paradox of Ethiopia's potential wealth and its actual poverty, as well as the total absence of industrial production and the poor level of commercial exchange.¹ Practically all the answers pointed to the excessive exactions placed on the gabbar as an important factor. Some concrete suggestions offered included a relaxation of the embargo on grain and cattle exports, the introduction of a uniform and centralized system of customs levying instead of the ubiquitous kella (toll gates), the granting of more mining and agricultural concessions, and, more pertinently to our consideration, the replacement of the arbitrary exactions on the gabbar by a fixed annual tribute (qurt gibir).² The practice of provincial governors to "tour" their provinces and prey on the peasantry with a retinue of up to 500 followers came in for particularly strong attack by, among others, Hiruy Walda Sillasse, who became foreign minister in 1927.³

Relatively speaking, the gabbar system had one redeeming feature about it: the peasant was not uprooted from his land. By contrast, the enslavement and trafficking of the peoples of southwest Ethiopia resulted in

1. B.S., 26.3.25.

2. B.S., 2.4.25., 9.4.25., 16.4.25., 3.12.25., 13.5.26., 14.1.26. It is interesting that in 1919 a group of conspirators accused Tafari of giving permission to merchants to export cattle and grain and granting concessions in salt and precious minerals. They added that such measures were tantamount to selling the country. Mars'e Hazan, Zawditu, pp. 179-80.

3. B.S., 4.3.26., 11.3.26., 9.12.26.

massive dislocation and depopulation of the area. It was a process started well before, but given a great push by, Minilik's conquests. It persisted throughout the first four decades of this century. Kafa, Gimira, and Maji were among the districts most affected. Jimma, otherwise universally praised for its good administration, was the most important centre of slave-dealing in the southwest. In the sa'id gold and slaves constituted the economic basis of the sheikhs' political power. Dangila in Gojam served as the northern entrepôt for the slave trade. The slave raids generally had the secret or open blessing of provincial governors. In 1907, Ras Tassamma returned from an allegedly punitive expedition to Gimira with over 1000 captive slaves for himself and his soldiers.¹ Iyasu's infamous campaign against the same people in 1912, when he is believed to have enslaved some 40,000 of them, stands as convincing proof of the ambiguous character of his reign.² The victims did not always passively submit to their raiders. Darley records the case of Serie, a leader of a guerrilla struggle of resistance in Gimira.³ The Anyuaa in Illubabor, by dint of courageous struggle as well as geographical protection, were able to prevent massive enslavement.

1. FO 371/192, Hohler to Grey, 14.8.07.

2. Pankhurst, pp. 107-11; Montandon, Ghimirra, p. 327; Darley, pp. 139-31; FO 141/409, Armbruster report, 25.8.07., for the Dangila trade. See below for the slave trade in the sa'id,

3. Op.cit., pp. 75-90.

The international ramifications of slavery and the slave trade in Ethiopia were no less significant. Imperialist powers showed great concern at the continuation of the practice, not so much because they were particularly overflowing with humanity but because they saw it, very much like the arms traffic, as an important card in the diplomatic game.¹ First, some administrative measures were suggested to check the slave trade. One of these measures was Sudan government administration of the Anyuua plains, although the Anyuua were not subjected to the same degree of devastating slaving activities as the people of Gimira and Maji to the south and southeast. The scheme fell through after initial hopes of materialization.² Iyasu's outrages in the southwest set off the Foreign Office thinking whether the independence of Ethiopia was not a luxury that the civilized world could scarcely afford.³ In 1920, Lord Lugard came up with a scheme for the cession of Zeila to Ethiopia in return for the abolition of the slave trade with British supervision. The Foreign Office did not respond enthusiastically.⁴ In 1922, following the publication of a

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1. The words are those of Gerald Campbell, British consul in Addis Ababa in 1919. FO 371/3498, Campbell to Sperling, 31.12.19.
 2. FO 141/398, Cromer to Harrington, 2.1.06.; Harrington to Cromer, 4.12.06.; see below,
 3. FO 371/1294, FO minutes on Thesiger to Grey, 29.8.12.; cf. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 20.1.13.; FO 371/1572, Thesiger to Grey, 12.5.13.
 4. FO 371/4399, Lugard memo, 23.5.20.; Sperling memo, 27.9.20.

series of articles on slavery and the slave trade in Ethiopia in the Westminster Gazette, there was a public outcry. The British minister in Addis Ababa at one time championed the self-determination of the conquered peoples of southern Ethiopia as a lasting remedy to the problem.¹ At other times, however, British officials including the said minister preferred to accept the status quo, arguing that slavery was "as much part of the social system as trade unionism in this country [i.e. Britain]",² and that "To abolish the capitalist system in England would be a less revolutionary measure".³

Some Ethiopian and foreign sympathizers saw the anti-slavery crusade of the British press as a mere cover for imperialist designs. Hakim Workinah (alias Dr. Martin) assailed in particular the arms embargo that was imposed on the country under the pretext of checking slave raids: "the main object of the prohibition of firearms and ammunition does not appear to be the abolition of slavery in the country, but the secret and political policy to make the people helpless and defenceless against foreign aggression and annexation."⁴ Al Akhbar in Cairo had earlier echoed similar sentiments

1. FO 371/7147, Russell to Curzon, 24.2.22.; cf. The Times, 12.4.23.

2. FO 371/8404, Sperling memo, 28.3.23.

3. FO 371/7149, Russell to Curzon, 10.2.22. This cautious tone has already been presaged in FO 371/3498, Thesiger memo, 1.1.20.; cf. FO 371/8404, Sperling note, 25.7.23.

4. Westminster Gazette, 15.8.22.

and attacked Britain's impertinence to assume that she could give or deny independence to Ethiopia at will.¹

An American journalist also saw the campaign as a cover for schemes to incorporate the country.² Emperor Haile Sellassie, whose measures to check slavery included the creation of a brass band from among the freed slaves of Sheikh Khojali, could also conclude his account of this aspect of his reign in his autobiography with a tone of complacency.³

Such depression of the peasants' life created by the combined assault of slavery and serfdom forms the setting for the low level of commercial transactions that observers often noted at the time. The incentive for production was lacking. To produce more than absolutely necessary was to invite the rapacity of the soldiery. What little surplus was produced was appropriated by the nobility and the official hierarchy in the form of multiple exactions. The peasants scarcely had the surplus in kind or the cash with which to acquire imported commodities. Export trade was also chiefly in such cash crops as coffee, which grew wild in the west and southwest, and items like ivory, which were not altogether inconsistent with the marauding habits of the provincial governors and their subordinates.

The low level of commercial expansion was in sharp contrast to what obtained in the European colonies.

1. 16.2.13.

2. US 884.113/15, Young to sec. of st., 20.4.23.

3. Hiywate-na Ya-Ityopya Irmijja, pp. 58, 60.

Over a period of 28 years in the early decades of the century, the total foreign trade of the country increased by only 72%, as compared to the 11-fold increase in the Sudan, and 15-fold increase in Uganda and Kenya. In the early 1930s, it amounted to 2/3 that of Cyprus and a sixth of that of Iraq.¹ All the same, the inherent injustice of exporting primary products (like hides) at low prices and importing processed goods (like leather) at high ones had begun to be felt. So had the threat of cheap manufactured goods to national crafts, of abujedid to shamma.²

British Rule in the Sudan

On 2 September, 1898, Omdurman fell to the Anglo-Egyptian forces. The following year, the so-called condominium agreement was concluded between Britain and Egypt. The agreement enunciated the great legal fiction of dual sovereignty over the Sudan, although the country to all intents and purposes remained a British colony until 1956. Nevertheless, Egypt, which had borne the

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1. Jennet Louise Henderson, Commercial Relations of Abyssinia with the Great Powers since 1896, M.A. dissertation (Stanford, 1935), pp. 154-58, 168-69, 174; G. Mackereth, Economic Conditions in Ethiopia (London, 1932), p. 18. For general problems of trade in Ethiopia, see C.F. Rey, Unconquered Abyssinia (London, 1923), pp. 207-14; A&P, vol. 42 (1907), C.R., Abyssinia (1905-06); vol. 46 (1911), C.R., Abyssinia (1910); vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Abyssinia (1913).
 2. Gabra Hiywat Baykadaan, Mangist-na Ya-Hizb Astadadar (Addis Ababa, 1916 EC), pp. 68, 74, 80, 97.

brunt of the expenses of the 1898 campaign, continued to provide annual subventions of hundreds of thousands of pounds to balance the Sudan budget until 1913. In return, the Egyptians had the dubious satisfaction of keeping a garrison in the Sudan, having their flag hoisted alongside the Union Jack, and of filling subordinate administrative posts. All powers were otherwise vested in the governor-general of the Sudan, who was invariably a British subject. The British agent and consul-general in Egypt, until 1907 Cromer, exercised powers of general supervision and provided the link between the Sudan and London. Not until 1910, when the governor-general's council was established, were the governor-general's supreme prerogatives diluted to any appreciable degree. The absolute powers of the governor-general were repeated in the lower tiers of the hierarchy by the provincial governor and the district commissioner.¹

While the 1910 arrangement signalled the increasing importance of civilian administration, embodied in the three secretaries (civil, financial, and legal), and although the beginnings of what later matured as the Sudan Political Service were seen as early as 1900, British administration in the Sudan remained, in both

1. Because of the general nature of this section, it has not been felt necessary to give meticulous documentation. The main works consulted are: P.M. Holt, A Modern History of the Sudan (London, 1967); Gabriel Warburg, The Sudan under Wingate (London, 1970); Muddathir Abd al-Rahim, Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan (Oxford, 1969); Harold MacMichael, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (London, 1934), and The Sudan (London, 1954).

style and personnel, largely military for over two decades. This state of affairs not only denied provincial administration a good measure of continuity (as military personnel were often subject to recall or transfer) but also fostered a cavalier attitude towards matters of commerce. In any case, the south, more particularly the Nuer, Anyuua and Beir territories near the border with Ethiopia, remained largely unadministered for most of this period. Patrols against the Anyuua and Beir in 1912 could only succeed in creating a military district which for long remained a mere cartographical entity. The "pacification" of the Gaajak Nuer had not been completed as late as 1928.

1924 is generally regarded as a watershed in modern Sudanese history. It was the year of the first organized nationalist revolt against British rule. It also marked the formal termination of what little control and influence the Egyptians had had in the Sudan. In the wake of the assassination of Sir Lee Stack, the governor-general, in Cairo, Egypt was forced to withdraw its troops, civilian officials, and teachers from the Sudan. An independent Sudanese military force, the Sudan Defence Force, was established. In the field of administration, the British abandoned their earlier policy of grooming young educated Sudanese for administrative responsibilities in favour of what came to be known as Native Administration. A spirited hunt was conducted to revive sometimes non-existent tribal institutions and establish them as legitimate channels of British authority.

An equally vigorous campaign was underway to de-Arabize the south and bar all forms of Egyptian or Arab influence from the region. Already, a 1922 ordinance had empowered the governor-general to declare any part of the Sudan "a closed district". A number of southern districts were accordingly declared "closed" (i.e. mainly to northern Sudanese) after 1924.¹

The undermining of Egyptian authority in the political sphere was accompanied by the growth of Port Sudan in place of Suakin as the most important channel of the Sudan's external trade.² The railway line from the Nile to the Red Sea was completed in 1905; the two terminals subsequently grew up to be Atbara and Port Sudan, respectively. The line was then extended to Khartoum and reached El Obeid, via Sennar on the Blue Nile, in 1911. In the south, the White Nile and its affluents remained the chief means of communication and transport. The Blue Nile, while less significant as a line of communication, provided the waters for the most ambitious agricultural scheme of the British period in the Sudan - the Gezira cotton plantations. Started in 1919, the Gezira scheme represents the most significant attempt to draw the Sudan into the world market. A desire to extend and develop it led into the protracted and in the end futile Tana negotiations outlined above. Less

1. The above theme is argued cogently and at some length by Muddathir Abd al-Rahim, pp. 65-83.

2. Cf. Abdel Wahab Abdel Rahim, An Economic History of the Sudan, 1899-1956, M.A. dissertation (Manchester, 1963), pp. 23 ff.

spectacular, although of considerable importance for the affected regions, was the growth of transfrontier trade, notably with the Congo, Uganda, and Ethiopia. The Gambella trading post, built on an enclave in Ethiopia leased to the British by Emperor Minilik, was the most successful example of the Sudan's commercial relations with her neighbours to the south and east.

CHAPTER 1

Negotiations for the Delimitation of the Boundary

(1898-1902)

Among Kitchener's first acts after the battle of Omdurman was the despatch of a letter to Minilik, announcing his victory over "our mutual enemies, the dervishes," and the liberation of the Sudanese from "the tyranny and oppression" of the Khalifa. Coming to something of even more immediate importance to Minilik, Kitchener mentions the liberation of a number of Ethiopian captives in Omdurman and their repatriation to their home country - as a gesture of the friendly feelings that the British and Egyptian governments entertain for Ethiopia.¹ Minilik, in replying to Kitchener, hails what he regards as a victory for all Christians. Only a few years back, he was haranguing the Khalifa on the theme of African solidarity against European intrusion.² Now he changes his tune to emphasize the common Christian bond that unites him with the victors.³ Ras Mangasha of Tigre, who had had the mortification of seeing his father, Emperor Yohannes, killed by the Mahdists at the battle of Matamma (March 1889), was even more uninhibited in his jubilation. In a letter to Kitchener, written in November, 1898, Mangasha thanked the British for the release and repatriation of the Ethiopian captives, and especially the sirdar "for having revenged the blood

1. SIR 60, app. 88A, Kitchener to Minilik, 20.8.98.

2. G. N. Sanderson, "Conflict and Cooperation", p. 38.

3. SIR 60, app. 88, Minilik to Kitchener, 27.11.98.

of King John". He concluded by saying: "I am extremely pleased that our common enemy has fallen into your hands, and now that you have taken revenge for the blood of my father King John, I consider you as my esteemed brother and am under obligation to you forever."¹

But, beneath these professions of mutual jubilation and gratitude, one discerns the beginning of the hard-headed territorial bargains that were to follow. The delimitation of the Sudan's eastern and south-eastern boundary with Ethiopia was to be a prime preoccupation of the Sudan government and the British Foreign Office. Kitchener, in his letter to Minilik cited above, made a point of underlining his occupation of Fashoda and Sobat, as a discreet reminder that Minilik's claims in that direction were not to pass unchallenged. In another letter to Harrington, the British minister in Addis Ababa, he advised him not to mention Marchand's presence at Fashoda to Minilik; he also reassured him that the furthest advance point of the Ethiopian troops is some 500 miles to the east of the mouth of the Sobat.² Wingate, writing on behalf of Kitchener, wrapped up the somewhat unpalatable news of the British occupation of Gedaref, which Minilik had claimed as Ethiopian territory in his oft-quoted circular of April 1891,³ in the more presentable package of the end of "dervish rule" in the Sudan and the bright

1. SIR 60, app. 90, Mangasha to Kitchener, 15.11.98.

2. SIR 60, app. 88A, Kitchener to Harrington, 20.9.98.

3. FO 95/751.

prospects of establishing "peace, tranquility and regular trade on the Abyssinian and Egyptian frontiers which have long been suffering from the misrule and oppression of the dervishes."¹ Minilik, in the above circular, had also included Karkuj, near Sennar, as Ethiopian territory and had even expressed hope, God willing, of restoring Ethiopia's "ancient boundaries" up to Khartoum and Lake Nyanza. He had set down the White Nile-Sobat junction as the westernmost limit of his empire, a claim which he later repeated in a letter to Rodd in 1897.² In June, 1898, too, an advance column of Dajach Tassamma's force had planted an Ethiopian flag at the junction, thereby giving tangible expression to Minilik's claims.³ Hence, one would think, Kitchener's concern to emphasize to Minilik his occupation of Fashoda and Sobat and the distance of 400 to 500 miles that separated him and the advance section of the Ethiopian forces.

The increasingly assertive stand of the Anglo-Egyptian authorities vis-à-vis Minilik contrasted with the more accommodating position they had assumed prior to the fall of the Mahdist state in the Sudan. The Rodd Mission that had come with the aim of forging an Anglo-Ethiopian alliance against the Mahdists in the

1. SIR 60, app. 89, Wingate to Minilik, 11.11.98.

2. Harold Marcus, "Ethio-British Negotiations Concerning the Western Border with the Sudan, 1896-1902," JAH IV (1963), 1, p. 83.

3. Sanderson, "Conflict and Cooperation," p. 35; FO 141/347 information of Colonel Artamanoff in Harrington to Cromer, 4.1.99; also reports of Faivre and Potter, who had accompanied Tassamma in Harrington to Cromer, 3.3.99.

wake of Ethiopia's resounding victory over Italy at Adwa in 1896, had also broached the question of delimiting the Ethio-Sudanese boundary. It was, however, content to come to an agreement over Ethiopia's eastern boundary with British Somaliland, and to postpone the western boundary until the British would be in a position to back up their claims with actual physical presence. Pressing the border negotiations while Britain had no hold in the Sudan, the mission felt, would amount to urging Minilik to realize his claims in the west and further facilitate the French thrust to the Upper Nile. The negotiations were thus abandoned, with the understanding that Minilik would not make any territorial cessions to foreign powers in the zone in question.¹

A memorandum on frontier negotiations written by the sirdar prior to September 1898 bears out this point of the readiness of the Anglo-Egyptian authorities to concede a number of Minilik's claims, though not all the claims set out in the 1891 circular. The memorandum laid down the general principle of safeguarding the Sudan from border raids and of avoiding the placing of Muslims under Ethiopian rule and recommended firmness "where points of strategic advantage which would secure peace on the Frontier are in question." It also urged that concessions should be made to Minilik's "greed for territorial aggrandizement", however exaggerated his claims might be. Ethiopia should thus be given "the more or less Christian Province of Gallabat." The line should then extend via Famaka to Nasser, with free ports

1. Marcus, "Ethio-British Negotiations," pp. 84-85.

for Ethiopia at Roseires and at the mouth of the Sobat.¹

Wingate, while regretting the loss of the gold-bearing districts of Bela Shangul to the Sudan, which he thought would have been averted by an advance of the Anglo-Egyptian forces to Khartoum in November 1897, nonetheless went even further than the sirdar in conceding Minilik's claims. He felt that Gedaref, which the sirdar argued Minilik should at least be persuaded to relinquish, should not be occupied by the Anglo-Egyptian forces, in view of "the great importance of not trespassing on what the Abyssinians consider their territory (and which, in all probability, we shall eventually agree to their having)."²

But, by the time Harrington had his first conversation with Minilik on the question of the frontier on April 15, 1899, the British position had changed dramatically. Already, Harrington had been told that Gallabat had been found to be more valuable than expected. If, he was advised, acting on previous information, he had committed himself to cession of the territory to Minilik, "you should not go further in this direction than you [can] help."³ And by May, 1899, Harrington had driven such a hard bargain that Minilik was forced to make a rather sentimental plea to retain even Matamma, let alone putting a claim for Gedaref:

1. DUR 122/1, Sirdar's memo on frontier negotiations, n.d.

2. DUR 122/1, Wingate to Rodd, 20.1.98.

3. FO 141/347, Cromer to Harrington, 27.1.99.

4. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 15.4.99.

5. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 26.5.99.

"Tell your Government," Minilik pleaded to Harrington, "I do not wish to claim Matamma as a right. I do not wish to make any question of rights about Matamma; even if I did, I have not the force to make my rights good against you. I merely ask your Government for friendship's sake to let me have Matamma, on account of the associations the place has for me and my people. There are many Christians there. King John was killed there, and the blood of many of my people have [sic] been spilt there and it is for these reasons we wish to have it."¹

In this first meeting, Harrington refused to specify the territories claimed by Britain, as Minilik requested. Instead, he put a claim to all the former Egyptian possessions, including Bela Shangul. To Minilik's protests and assertions of rights over Bela Shangul, Harrington feigned magnanimity and consented to recognize Minilik's claims with the proviso that Minilik was to grant a gold mining concession to a British national, Lane.² With his eyes on the two other powers that competed for influence and favour at the court of Minilik, Russia and France, Harrington wrote in anticipation;

"With the gold mining concessions in the hands of English capitalists, should the gold bearing districts be found rich, the influence of these two Powers ought to become a cypher, and British influence paramount."³

The concession was actually granted before the end of the year. It covered an area extending from Fazughli in the north to the rivers Songa and Dabus in the south, and from Dabus in the east

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1. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 26.5.99.
 2. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 15.4.99, 22.4.99, 26.5.99
 3. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 26.5.99.

to the boundary line to be agreed upon in the west. It gave the concessionaire the right to prospect for gold, silver "and anything that can be got out of the earth". The duration was for four years, with the possibility of a fifty-year extension if minerals were discovered. The royalty to be paid was a token 8%. And while Minilik ruled out the possibility of forced labour among the people of Bela Shangul, he nonetheless consented to cause them "to be informed" about the work.¹ About this time, too, the desirability of securing for the Anglo-Egyptian garrisons at Famaka and Fazughli a sanatorium on the Ethiopian plateau was discussed, as well as the need to provide for the contingency of the Cape to Cairo Railway by reserving dry ground on the western slopes of Bela Shangul.²

What changed the British bargaining position so dramatically was the considerable advance made by the Anglo-Egyptian forces in the eastern and south-eastern Sudan subsequent to the fall of Omdurman. In early December, 1898, Gallabat was occupied and the British and Egyptian flags hoisted. Instructions were however given to avoid all hostilities in case of confrontation with Abyssinians, "unless absolutely necessary". Thus, two Ethiopian flags planted there earlier were not tampered with.³ Muhammad Sharaf, the ruler of Gallabat, was instructed to announce the bitter news to Ras Bitwaded Mangasha Atikam, Minilik's representative in the area. The style of the letter clearly

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1. FO 141/353, Harrington to Cromer, 5.1.00.
 2. FO 1/44, Rodd memo in Rodd to Salisbury, 4.8.99.
 3. SIR 60, app. 77C, Collinson to Staff Officer, 7.12.98.

betrayed its origin. The gist of the messages was that the British, despite their occupation of Gallabat, wish to maintain friendly relations and encourage trade. The issue of Gallabat, the letter concluded, would be resolved in negotiations between Cairo and Minilik.¹

Mangasha, who earlier had taken part in the general chorus of jubilation - formal or otherwise - at the Mahdist defeat and sent letters of congratulations and friendly expressions to the queen, Lord Salisbury and Cromer, could not conceal his consternation at the news. After protestations of his special friendship with the British, he asked Colonel J. Collinson, O.C. Troops in eastern Sudan, "But why did you go to Gallabat after I had put my flags there! You should have told me beforehand that you were going to Gallabat. I have informed my master Menelik of what you have done." To this Collinson replied by arguing that, in occupying Gallabat, he only followed instructions from Cairo. The Ethiopian flags, he assured him, remained unaffected. He concluded his letter with the customary refrain of the end of "dervish rule" and the beginning of "a rule of peace to all well-behaved people. The road is open for your people to come for trade, and I will protect them."²

Minilik also expressed concern at the occupation of Gallabat, which he regarded as an old tributary of Ethiopia. He reminded Harrington of his earlier assurances that British troops had been given strict orders not to encroach on Ethiopian

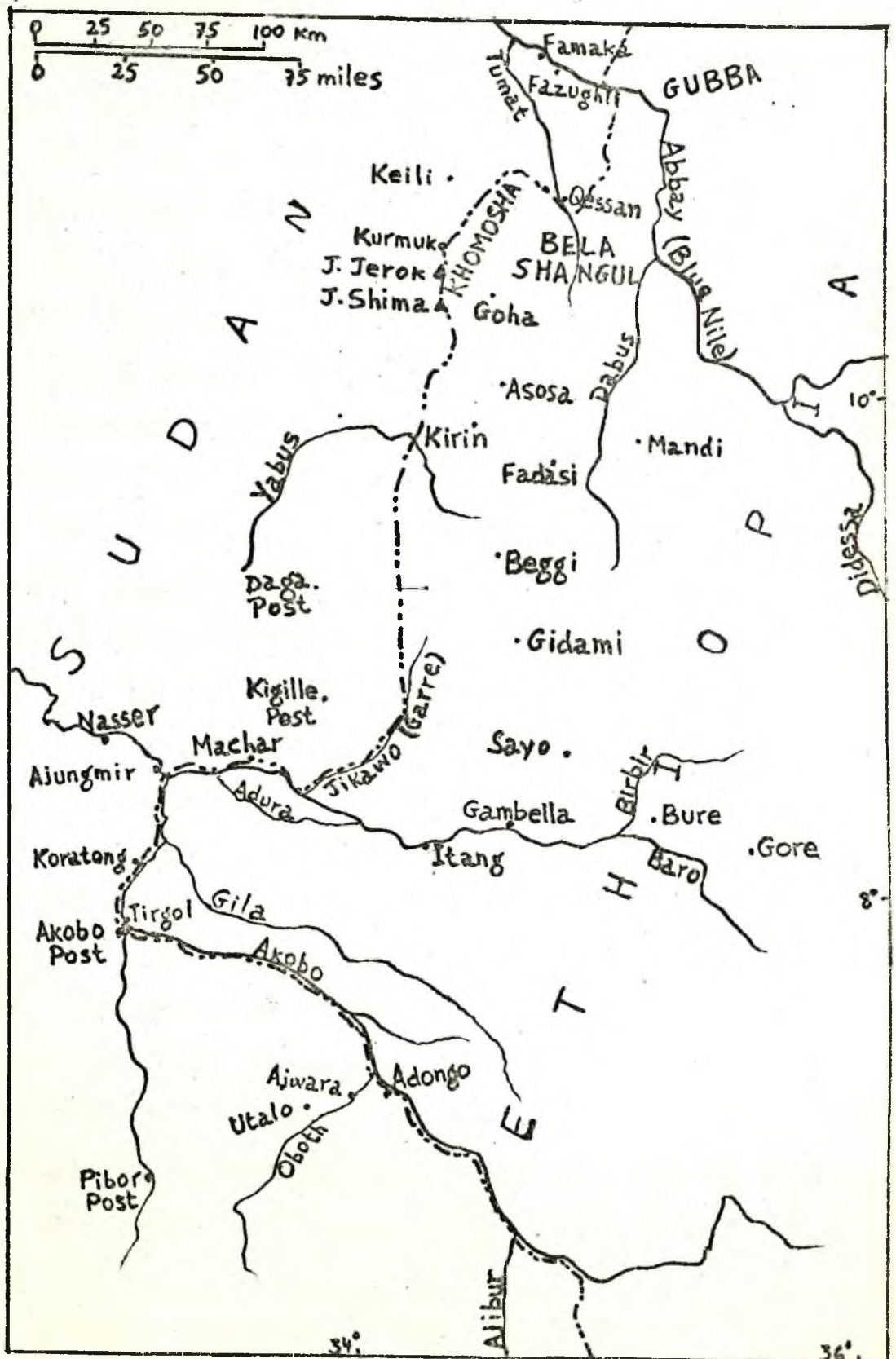
1. SIR 60, app. 78, 17.12.98.

2. SIR 60, app. 79, n.d.

territory, and reiterated his prior claims to the area which the hoisting of the flags clearly signified. Ultimately, however, the preservation of friendly relations with the British seemed to have outweighed considerations of reiterating his rights over Gallabat; he assured Harrington, "now so that there should be no fighting between our people, let our respective flags stay where they are. When you and I meet we will talk it over."¹ This theme of friendship was invoked again by Minilik when Harrington complained to him about the activities of his officers in the Gallabat area, where they were levying taxes and writing letters to Sheikh Muhammad claiming that Gallabat was Ethiopian territory. Minilik professed ignorance of the whole thing and told Harrington not to give too much weight to the activities of border governors.²

In the Sobat basin, as well, Minilik made a steady retreat from his earlier claims until he ended up conceding an enclave well within what he had considered Ethiopian territory. Kitchener's establishment of the British presence in September 1898 was followed by probings up the Sobat to ascertain the exact position of the Ethiopian troops and their intentions, if any, to go down the Sobat. A post was established at Nasser and the idea was considered of strengthening it to ward off possible Ethiopian attack during the dry season when navigation up the Sobat was impossible and the post isolated.³ At Ajungmir, near

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1. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 14.1.99.
 2. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 28.12.99.
 3. SIR 60, app. 53, 18.12.98.



2. The Borderland

the Pibor-Sobat junction, the British forces came across further confirmation of the Ethiopian advance down the Sobat a few months back. The Nuer in the area told them that an Ethiopian force had stopped twice on its way to and from the White Nile in the summer. Youé, the Nuer chief, had signed a treaty - presumably of submission - and received two Ethiopian flags and some clothes. The Nuer had also been given strict orders to have no dealing with anyone but Ethiopians. They were hence reluctant to accept the presents offered them by the British troops in exchange for some wood that the Nuer had provided; they said they would rather tell their chief that the wood was taken by force.¹

These probings by the British forces were not much to the liking of Dajazmach Tassamma, Minilik's general responsible for the White Nile expedition. He registered his protest in a letter to "the English Governor at Nasser and Sobat", in which he emphasized that "The boundaries of Abyssinia are up to the Nile at Nat Jabai [presumably Nach Abbay, the Amharic for White Nile], where the Abyssinian flag has been hoisted by me 6 months ago, after much fatigue and loss of 345 men." Citing the British occupation of Nasser and the surrounding areas, Tassamma went on to ask: "do you mean by this occupation peace or war, or to visit the places? If you mean to visit the place only, I have no objection to it...; but if you mean to occupy it please inform me and communicate with my Government your real intention."²

The reply that Tassamma got was characteristic: the

1. SIR 60, app. 55, 15.12.98; app. 58B, 14.12.98.

2. SIR 63, 27.3.99.

matter would be referred to headquarters for settlement. In the meantime, confident that the impending rains ruled out any further Ethiopian advance, the British sent a further reconnaissance mission up the Baro. Its aims were to discover the extent of navigability of the river and the exact position of the Ethiopian force.¹ Only two months later, too, Harrington was to propose to Minilik the granting of a sanatorium on the Ethiopian plateau, to be used by the British garrison at Nasser.²

In the Bela Shangul front, the tug-of-war for territorial acquisitions assumed a more dramatic and involved character than either the Gallabat or Sobat front. This was due to the more active role played by the local rulers in the whole process of claims and counter-claims. The British invoked the convenient argument of Egyptian "irredentism". The Ethiopians, determined to hold on to these much-coveted gold-rich districts, emphasized their prior advent to the area. The local rulers manoeuvred in between to try and choose their allegiance and influence the delimitation in their favour.

When the Anglo-Egyptian forces started their march up the Blue Nile in late 1898, an Ethiopian force led by Ras Makonnin had already occupied Bela Shangul. There is conflicting evidence as to how much further from Bela Shangul the Ethiopian force went. But there is general agreement that Makonnin sent flags to some of the neighbouring sheikhs, including that of Fazughli.³ The

1. Ibid.

2. FO 1/44, Ilg to Harrington, 31.5.99.

3. Bakura Sion Tilahun (Ya-Asosa Bani Shangul Tarik, unpublished Cont/...

second Ethiopian expedition, led by Dajach Damiss, is believed to have campaigned further up to Famaka and planted an Ethiopian flag there.¹ When General Hunter, commanding the Anglo-Egyptian forces on the Blue Nile, arrived in Roseires in late September, 1898, he found that he had been preceded by an Ethiopian party which had distributed five flags among Ahmad Abu Shotal of Roseires, Abu Shok Ibrahim of Gubba, Makk Hussein Ben Hir, Makk Rajab Hussein of Fazughli, and Abd al-Rahman Khojali (Tur al-Guri) of Bela Shangul. The party had stayed in Roseires for fifteen days and instructed Ahmad if he came across any "Inglizi" to show them the flag and to claim that he was under Ethiopian protection. But in an interview with Hunter, he is said to have strongly denied any declaration of submission or allegiance to the Ethiopians. The flag, Hunter was reassured, was never hoisted or in any other way displayed in Roseires. Cheered up by the warm welcome that was allegedly accorded to the Anglo-Egyptian troops by the people of Roseires, Hunter wrote to the three important sheikhs of Bela Shangul: Tur al-Guri, Khojali al-Hasan, and Muhammad Mahmud Hameida. He opened his letter to Tur al-Guri with the customary announcement of the victory over the Mahdists, by virtue of which "all the countries

3 Cont/... Amharic manuscript, IES, p.20) claims that Makonnin went as far as Fazughli and Abu Sheneina. An informant from Bela Shangul told Harrington in 1899 that Makonnin stopped at Bela Shangul and only sent flags - not troops - to the rulers of "Heli" (Keili?) and Akaro: FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 3.1.99; Atieb Ahmad Dafalla's evidence (Sheikh Khojele Al-Hassan and Béla-Shangul (1825-1938), BA dissertation, HSIU, 1973, p.41) also points to Makonnin returning from Bela Shangul, although after sending a flag to Makk Rajab of Fazughli.

1. Atieb loc. cit.; Harrington's informant (see above) denied this, adding "With what leg can they cross the Blue Nile to hoist their flag."

that lately acknowledged dervish rule now come under the joint dominion of Great Britain and Egypt." He then went on to inform him of the Anglo-Egyptian advance up the Blue Nile as far as Roseires. Peaceful co-existence, Hunter assured Tur al-Guri, is what the British want; but he invited him to send delegates to Khartoum "to consult with us as to our future relations" - which was probably intended as a discreet call for submission.¹

In reply to the above, Muhammad Khojali, wakil of Tur al-Guri (then in captivity in the hands of Dajach Damiss), recapitulated his record of uninterrupted fighting against "the Baggari Abdulla since 1307 (1890), because I found his rule was contrary to the precepts of Mohammedan law." He then went on to narrate the despoliation of his country attendant to the Ethiopian conquest, which itself was the result of an understanding between the Khalifa and Minilik. The news of "the return of Khedivial Government" he received with joy. His departure to Khartoum, however, he deferred until the return of Abd al-Rahman himself, which he expects to be soon. Nor could he conceal the Ethiopian pressure. A group of "Abyssinian messengers" were keeping watch on him; "had it not been for them I would have gone to see you with our father Ibrahim Mohammedein and brother Abdulla Idris, and in all cases I leave the matter to you."² In a simultaneous letter to Nason, the commandant of Roseires, however, he stated that he had sent Ibrahim and Abdulla, "who will, as our representatives in Omdurman,

1. SIR 60, app. 72, Hunter's report, 2.10.98.

2. SIR 60, app. 80A, Muhammad Khojali to Kitchener, 13.10.98.

consult with the Commander there." He promised to meet the commandant himself as soon as the Ethiopian messengers retired.¹

While Hunter was trying to lure Abd al-Rahman into the Anglo-Egyptian fold, Damiss was assiduously pursuing the allegiance of another frontier sheikh, Adlan Surur, whom in a letter written on 9 October, 1898, he addressed as "Governor-General of the Fung Mountains and environs." Damiss himself had the rather honorific title of "Ras of the Abyssinians, Gallas and all Arabs." The letter was a brilliant piece of persuasive propaganda. He claimed the country up to the White Nile as "the property of the Ganhoi" (i.e. Minilik) and enjoined him to come and swear allegiance to the Emperor "for the safety and welfare of your old and young men, women and children." He then enumerated the other rulers who had already submitted to Minilik (Abd al-Rahman, Jote, Kumsa, Khojali), adding that in each case "his country was saved and prospered." If Adlan really considered himself a "Sultan", Damiss continued tauntingly, "do not hesitate to come and you will help the welfare and prosperity of your country."²

Curiously enough, Abd al-Rahman himself also wrote to Adlan, intermingling in his letter a denunciation of the Ethiopian conquest with rather flattering words for Dajach Damiss, whom he considered to be "kind and good". He advised Adlan to trust in the good faith of Damiss and comply with his

1. SIR 60, app. 80A, Muhammad Khojali to Nason, 18.10.98.

2. SIR 60, app. 80A, Damiss to Adlan Surur, 9.9.98.

summons. Even more meaningfully, he concluded: "I advise you to come at once, and it is better for you, as I find they are advancing from our country as far as the White Nile."¹ Unfortunately, we do not know Adlan's reaction to these concerted efforts to persuade him to embrace Ethiopian rule. Nor do the British seem to have exerted much pressure in this direction.

It was over the district of Fazughli that the Ethiopian and Anglo-Egyptian forces waged the fiercest competition for allegiance and territorial acquisition. The central figure in this "scramble" was the makk of Fazughli himself, who was subjected to intense pressure from the Ethiopian side. He was not a passive spectator of the developments, either. He kept writing to the commandant at Roseires, reiterating his desire to embrace Anglo-Egyptian rule.

The Ethiopian pressure started as early as May 1898 when Minilik himself wrote to Rajab to follow Abd al-Rahman's example and, as "the son of a great father", go to Minilik and submit. Failing that, the emperor threatened the makk with the loss of his country.² Rajab, with the memory of the Ethiopian conquest of Bela Shangul and the environ still fresh in his mind, desperately turned to the British for assistance. He was at pains to emphasize his allegiance to the Khedivial government until "the appearance of the so-called Mahdi". He wrote with bitterness about the carte blanche that the Khalifa gave to Minilik to annex - and plunder - the districts of Bela Shangul.

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1. SIR 60, app. 80A, Abd al-Rahman Khojali to Adlan, 15.9.98.
 2. SIR 60, app. 80A, Minilik to Rajab, 30.5.98.

He requested that he be given the aman and that the gunboat, which had been withdrawn earlier, be sent back, so that his people "might believe that the Government has been victorious and that the enemies of God, the Isawuin (Christians), might also believe and get frightened, as the messengers of the Negus are still here."¹

The response of Nason, commandant at Roseires, to the above was rather cautious - a reflection of the relative weakness of his position vis-à-vis the Ethiopians. He was ready to give Rajab the aman. He could also recite the customary refrain of the end of Mahdist rule and the beginning of an era of peace and prosperity. But he could not promise any immediate steps to confront the Ethiopian pressure. He in fact advised what amounted to a retreat in the face of the Ethiopian advance; he told Rajab to send his cattle and treasures to Roseires, where they would be safe under Sudan government protection. Meanwhile, if the Ethiopian messengers with Rajab could be persuaded to meet Nason at Abzagoli (Abu Zoghali), south of Roseires, he would be ready to discuss the matter with them. But, the commandant told Rajab emphatically, "I do not wish these Abyssinians to come here previous to my seeing them at some place a few miles south of Roseires."²

The reason for this was probably either because he did not wish a Roseires frontier to be regarded as a fait accompli, or because he was at pains to conceal the rather slender force

1. SIR 60, app. 80A, Rajab to commandant of the Egyptian troops, 16 Jumada I 1916 (sic pro 1316) = 2 Oct. 1898.

2. SIR 60, app. 80A, Nason to Rajab, 8.10.98.

under his command; he was still waiting for reinforcements from Sennar. In fact, in a letter to General Hunter, he spelt out clearly that were the Ethiopian envoys to meet him, he was going to tell them that any attack on Rajab, who had already declared his allegiance to Anglo-Egyptian rule, was to be interpreted as a hostile act against the two governments. And, had the envoys any proposition to make, he was going to invite them to Roseires, and detain them there until he got a reply, because he did not "consider it advisable that they should know what our force here consists of."¹ Later, to Nason's consternation, Damiss was to advance to a meeting between the two commanders with the whole of his army, although he had apparently promised earlier to proceed with only a small escort.² Damiss's force was said to number a thousand rifles, while the Anglo-Egyptian force, slender as it was, could not count on much assistance from Rajab or the other neighbouring sheikhs. The river was also impassable for gun-boats.³

Early in 1899, Rajab was subjected to more pressure in the form of a message from the wakil of Tur al-Guri urging him to submit to Minilik. Rajab intensified his pleas to the Anglo-Egyptian authorities to avert his incorporation into Ethiopia, which he alleged would mean his death and the destruction of his people. Lacking support, he intended to flee his country and settle with his people near Roseires. Damiss, who had meanwhile moved his force from Mandi to Dul, continued

1. SIR 60, app. 80A, Nason to Hunter, 8.10.98.

2. SIR 62, app. F, Nason to Damiss, 4.2.99; Damiss to Nason, 1.2.99.

3. SIR 60, app. 80A, Nason to Hunter, 8.10.98.

summoning Rajab, promising not to detain him. Although advised by Nason to comply with Damiss's wish to save his village from destruction, Rajab was adamant in refusing, saying he did not care much about the village as he had moved all his people and property across the river.

It was probably in the light of this relentless pressure from the Ethiopian side that the Anglo-Egyptian authorities decided on a pre-emptive occupation of Fazughli.¹ Damiss also pushed further down along the Tumat river, his advance in many cases heralded by a trail of refugees.² All the while, each side was accusing the other of trespassing on territory already acquired. Damiss politely rejected Nason's request for a meeting at Famaka, which he had occupied in mid-February, presumably considering that it would amount to tacit recognition of Anglo-Egyptian sovereignty over territory where the Ethiopian flag had already been hoisted.³ Harrington protested to Minilik about Damiss's "harassment" of Rajab although his country had already come under Anglo-Egyptian sway.⁴ The British minister hoped that Damiss would follow the "exemplary" conduct of the officials on the Gallabat front and refrain from making any more advances.⁵

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1. SIR 61, app. D; FO 141/347, Cairo to Harrington, 21.1.99.
 2. SIR 62; FO 141/347, Cairo to Harrington, 24.2.99.
 3. SIR 62, app. F, Damiss to Nason, 9.1.99.
 4. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 1.3.99.
 5. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 21.3.99.

Eventually, a meeting was arranged between the two commanders, Nason and Damiss, at the Tumat-Blue Nile junction on 20 February, 1899. Damiss complained about the removal of the Ethiopian flag that had earlier been hoisted in Fazughli. Rajab produced the flag but denied that it had ever been hoisted. It was finally agreed that the Ethiopian flag should be re-hoisted, pending the conclusion of the negotiations between the two governments to determine the status of the district. Damiss and his escort visited the village the following day and withdrew on the next.¹ The British authorities, who hailed the meeting as a success, thereafter directed their attention to the problem of the refugees from Bela Shangul. Assisted by Muhammad Khojali, Tur al-Guri's wakil and brother, they began persuading the refugees to return to their home district, assuring them that "they will be treated as well by the Abyssinian Government as they would be by the Egyptian Government or any other Government."² Damiss turned his attention to the White Nile, to realize Ethiopian claims in that direction.³

Of the other sheikhs in the Bela Shangul area, Hamdan Beshir of Keili, controlling the important Kurmuk district, received summons from Damiss ordering him to go and pay homage to Minilik. Hamdan denied the legitimacy of Ethiopian claims over his territory and asked for Anglo-Egyptian protection.⁴ Abu Shok

1. SIR 62.

2. SIR 62, app. F, Nason to Damiss, 27.3.99.

3. SIR 62, app. F, Damiss to Nason, recd. 28.3.99; Bakura Sion, p.20.

4. SIR 64.

of Gubba, on the other side of the Blue Nile, also received summons to Addis Ababa towards the end of 1898. He had earlier paid tribute to both the Egyptian and Ethiopian governments. He therefore decided to maintain the same status of dubious loyalty by turning to the Ethiopians for support against some minor sheikhs whom he distrusted and at the same time expressing to the Anglo-Egyptian authorities his readiness to encourage trans-frontier trade.¹

The position of the rulers of Bela Shangul proper was no less ambiguous. The sheikh, Abd al-Rahman (Tur al-Guri), was himself in detention; his brother, Muhammad Khojali, was acting as his wakil. For most of this period, he played the role of Minilik's or Damiss's link man, transmitting orders to more distant and more recalcitrant sheikhs and generally advising submission to Ethiopian rule.² In view, however, of his professed satisfaction at the return of "Khedivial" rule in the Sudan and his eagerness to meet the Anglo-Egyptian authorities, his service to Damiss and Minilik seems to have been less out of conviction than out of consideration for the safety of his detained brother, Angerri, Tur al-Guri's head slave and commander-in-chief of his army, had defied Ethiopian authority for a long time. Eventually, however, according to his own story, it became a matter of choosing between his master's life and his independence. To the dismay and disgust of Nason³, who presumably had counted on

1. SIR 60, app. 80A, 14.10.98; SIR 62, app F, Abu Shok to officer commanding Fazughli, 19.2.99.

2. See, for instance, above, p. 81.

3. SIR 62, app. F, Nason, 18.2.99. Nason described Angerri as "utterly untrustworthy. He is a very cunning black, with, I should say, no principles."

the redoubtable general as a buffer against Ethiopian advance, he joined Damiss. His explanation was simple: blackmail. He was accused of having been sent by Tur al-Guri to bring in the Turks (i.e. the Anglo-Egyptian troops). He was therefore ordered to report at once, or else Tur al-Guri and his whole family would be killed. In a long letter explaining his apparent turn-about, he appealed to the British commandant for restraint and moderation in dealing with the Ethiopians, lest any incidents give them cause to bring havoc and destruction on the country. "Please, sir," Angerri pleaded, "do not do anything against them, because they have no rule and no sort of Government, and hoisting their flag in a country will not give them right to take it.... Let them put the flag wherever they like, our intention is that no fight should take place in the country ... We hope that after they leave the country you will occupy all the old Government frontiers." The culprit, as usual, is Khojali al-Hasan. It was he who told the Ethiopians that "I intended to attack them in rear while the Turks attacked the front, and advised them not to advance until I had gone to them."¹

In a subsequent letter to the governor of Roseires by Tur al-Guri's family - including his brother, his cousin and Angerri - it was again Khojali who is singled out as the source of all the troubles of Bela Shangul. In language which left much room for speculation as to what exactly they wanted to say, they informed the governor that they were ready to go and meet

1. SIR 62, app. F, Angerri to Lewis, 1.2.98.

him, had it not been for "the present trouble in Abyssinia", which had caused their delay. The cause of all the trouble, they repeated, was Khojali, who told the Ethiopians that they had communication with the governor and that all the people of Bela Shangul had fled to the Anglo-Egyptian side; hence, they alleged, the advance of the Ethiopian army to Dul (from its former position further east).¹

Guile and double-dealing were indeed outstanding features of Khojali's character.² The supreme example of this was, of course, his attitude during the Ethiopian conquest of Bela Shangul: he played a delicate game of reiterating his loyalty to the Khalifa, expressing his solidarity with his fellow sheikhs, and at the same time establishing surreptitious links with the Ethiopians. It earned him the lasting hatred of his neighbours, but saved him from the imprisonment that became the lot of the two other important sheikhs, Tur al-Guri and Muhammad Mahmud.³ But only for a while, for he was soon found instigating the people of Bela Shangul to emigrate en masse to the Sudanese side, and joined the other sheikhs in detention.⁴ His brother, Abd al-Rahman Wad al-Hasan, was less

1. SIR 61, app. D, Sheikh Ettom Khojali et al to Lewis, recd. 17 Ramadhan 1316/25 Jan. 1899.

2. Atieb, passim. This characterization of Khojali coming from his own descendant, we may safely assume that he had few redeeming qualities in this respect. One can argue, however, that all this was his method of preserving his independence.

3. See above, p. 26.

4. Bakura Sion, p. 20.

equivocal in his choice of allegiance. Speaking for "all the Arabs in Assosa" as well as for Khojali himself, he expressed their desire "to be under the present Sudan Government, as they were in the old Sudan Government. They cannot communicate their wishes in writing to the Government, because the Abyssinians prevent them from doing so, and punish them if they catch any letter from them to this effect."¹

Thus, by the end of May, 1899, when Harrington was able to wring from Minilik a mining concession in Bela Shangul and the emperor had to make his sentimental plea to be allowed to retain Matamma, the Anglo-Egyptian forces were in a visibly stronger position than they were in early 1898, when both Kitchener and Wingate were considering - if only tentatively - a Gedaref-Sobat frontier. From the idea of a possible Ethiopian occupation of Gedaref, they had moved to dual sovereignty over Gallabat. The possibility of Ethiopia's western frontier stretching up to the Sobat-Nile confluence had been permanently eliminated by the establishment of an Anglo-Egyptian post at Nasser. In the central sector, the Ethiopians' claim over Fazughli had been challenged by an Anglo-Egyptian presence there. Nor could it have been of much comfort to Damiss to fall back on the wavering loyalties of the people of Bela Shangul. Minilik, victor of Adwa though he was, was not prepared for a

1. SIR 72, app. B, information given at Omdurman, 26.1.01.

1. FO 141/347, Harrington to Trevelyan, 3.7.99.

2. See a collection of some of their correspondence, mostly in 1901, see FO 120/3.

physical confrontation with Britain, who had already scored her own victories over the Mahdists at Omdurman, and the French at Fashoda. Harrington's confidence and strength on the conference table was indeed to a large measure a reflection of the position in the field. To the familiar refrain of Egyptian "irredentism", he could add the standard yardstick of imperial expansion: effective occupation. To gentler proddings for more and more concessions, he could insinuate the fairly embarrassing prospect of publication of the emperor's correspondence with the Khalifa.¹

Harrington was not alone in exerting pressure on Minilik to concede Anglo-Egyptian claims. Abuna Mattewos, the Coptic metropolitan and a close friend of Wingate,² could also be counted upon to bring the weight of his spiritual influence to bear on Minilik. Far more interesting, perhaps, is the role of another unidentified Copt, who had given up a post offered him in the French railway company to work for the British cause with almost missionary zeal. He was an Anglo-Egyptian emissary in the strict sense of the word, striking a delicate balance between British and Egyptian interests. He kept urging the abun to dissuade Minilik from pursuing a course of "intransigence" in the negotiations. England, he said, was not Italy. An Anglo-Ethiopian war would mean the erasure of Ethiopia from the map of Africa and the loss of thousands of Christian lives. In an audience with the emperor, this rather

1. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 3.3.99.

2. For a collection of some of their correspondence, mostly personal, see DUR 100/8.

peculiar agent emphasized that Ethiopia's Enemy Number One was still Italy, France making a close second; from England, Minilik could only expect friendship, provided he did not set himself too stubbornly against the English claims. With due regard for Egyptian interests, too, he suggested to Minilik the formation of an "European bureau" staffed by Egyptians and charged with the task of "redactions des traités et des lettres adressés aux puissances." He even urged the introduction of such Egyptian papers as Misr and Mukattam.¹ Exactly how much weight these concerted pressures had on Minilik in influencing his decisions it is difficult to assess. But they can not be discounted altogether.

When it came to the criterion of effective occupation, as well, Minilik was arguing from a position of weakness. For, despite brilliant campaigns by his generals, no permanent posts were established. Nor could they have been established, bearing in mind the inveterate dread of the lowlands that the Ethiopian highlanders had. Mangasha protested at the Anglo-Egyptian occupation of Gallabat from Chilga, well inside Ethiopian territory. Tassamma protested at their advance to Nasser from Gore. Only Damiss was on the spot in Fazughli to defend his case - and Minilik was later to use this argument in the negotiations.² True, Ethiopian flags had been hoisted at Gallabat, Fazughli, and the White Nile prior to the Anglo-Egyptian advent.

1. French typescript of long and detailed memo in DUR 122/2. Some eight years later, the Egyptian interests which the emissary was so arduously trying to promote got a boost when, at the request of Minilik and through the mediacy of Abuna Mattewos, three Coptic teachers came to Addis Ababa. Among their first pupils were Iyasu and Tafari, the two protagonists of the post-Minilik political drama. Eight more teachers came the following year to teach in Harar and Ankobar.

But so was the French flag on the White Nile; but France was not spared the Fashoda débacle. In the end, with due allowance for the spirit of resentment with which he pronounced it, Angerri's statement quoted above stands to reason: "hoisting their flag in a country will not give them right to take it."¹ What was more decisive was the military and diplomatic muscle behind the flag.

Tentatively at least, an agreement was reached on the future boundary in May 1899. Minilik's proposals had been accepted, but in a considerably modified form. He was to retain Bela Shangul and Gubba. But the Famaka district, including Fazughli, was definitely lost to him. The line between Bela Shangul and Sobat was also made liable to deflection if tribes tributary to Jote or Damiss were to be found on the Sudanese side. But the inclusion of Nasser in the Sudan was guaranteed by a provision that the boundary would cross the Sobat at its first tributary east of Nasser. Minilik was assured of a satisfactory arrangement as to Matamma in due course of time, but he had definitely lost all claims to the Gallabat province, whose eastern boundaries the line was to follow. Nonetheless, Minilik seemed quite ready to sign a treaty. Not so the British. It was not only ^{the} unresolved

1. Cont... Those assigned to the latter place had to be transferred to Dire Dawa owing to local opposition. Their salaries ranged from 100 to 170 dollars. Mars'e Hazan, Minilik, pp. 17-18, 30-32.

2. FO 1/45, Gwynn to Talbot, 1.2.01.

1. See above p. 85.

question of Matamma that delayed the signature. More important, from the British point of view, were two considerations. First, it was deemed necessary to make adequate surveys of the frontier regions before reaching a final agreement.¹ Secondly; it was felt equally important to come to prior agreement with Italy, whose Eritrean possession adjoined both Ethiopia and the Sudan.²

Accordingly, two survey parties were despatched towards the end of 1899. One was led by Major Gwynn and was charged with the survey of the districts between the Blue Nile and the Sobat. Another party, led by Major Austin, was to explore the section between the Sobat and Lake Rudolf. Although Minilik's permission was duly obtained, an element of secrecy - as well as of caution - surrounded the whole operation.

"The gist of our instructions," wrote Gwynn retrospectively, "were to pose as a semi-scientific, semi-shooting expedition, and to avoid discussing frontier questions with any one, except possibly Abyssinian officers of some rank whom we might meet; it was obviously inadvisable to unsettle the local natives or to encourage them in any way to resist Abyssinian parties until the frontier question was settled and the Government in a position to give them some protection. We were not to enter without invitation any districts known to be occupied by Abyssinians but we were as far as possible to ascertain the limits of such occupation and the position of Abyssinian posts. This especially applied to Beni Shangul, in which, as old Egyptian territory, our intentions might be open to suspicion."³

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1. Harrington did not even possess a map of the regions when he made these early negotiations: G. Gwynn, "The Frontiers of Abyssinia: A Retrospect," JRAS, (Jan., 1937), p.151.
 2. FO 141/347, Harrington to Cromer, 8.9.99; Cromer to Harrington, 21.10.99.
 3. "Frontiers of Abyssinia," p. 152.

Barring a five-week detention in Gidami, Gwynn's party was the more successful of the two. He was able to meet a number of frontier rulers or their representatives. The survey also provided him an opportunity to sound the feelings of the frontier peoples about their choice of allegiance to either the Ethiopian or Sudan governments. He was also able to do a good deal of mapping of the area.¹

On the basis of his observations, he made two alternative proposals. The first would have left Bela Shangul, Asosa, Qassan and some parts of the Fazughli district to Ethiopia. At the same time, it would have meant considerable gains to the Sudan in the Khomasha and Kirin districts. This Gwynn regarded as the minimum that the British should claim. He felt that it would in fact be necessary to include Dul and Kirin - as well as Keili - in the Sudan to provide for the contingency of establishing police posts along the frontier, as these places could easily provide water and rations. The second, alternative, proposal, while not making much substantial changes in the southern sector, put Qassan, Fazughli, and Keili squarely on the Sudanese side. In the southern sector, Gwynn advised greater flexibility. The country, he felt, was too "worthless" for serious contention; the possibility of Ethiopian occupation too remote. "As regards the Sonka and Baro valleys,"

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1. For a comprehensive report on the survey, with useful appendices, see FO 1/44, encl. in Gwynn to Wingate, 26.5.00. The report was also published in "The Geographical Journal", XVIII (1901), pp. 562-73, under the title of "Surveys on the Proposed Sudan-Abyssinian Frontier".

to quote him in full, "I do not think it matters much how the line is drawn, as the Gallas do not push their raids any distance. The Yambos [i.e. Anyuaa] appear to be on good terms with the Gallas, and may fairly be left in the Abyssinian sphere."¹ Ethiopian claims on the Nuer districts, however, he considered unjustified, as the Ethiopian campaigns had scarcely penetrated or were likely to penetrate the Nuer country² both because of the forbidding climate and Nuer resistance.

The retention of the Nuer in the Sudan is what the second surveyor, Austin, also recommended.³ This was one of two proposals, envisaging a neat ethnic division, giving all the Anyuaa to Ethiopia and the Nuer to the Sudan. The only obstacle he anticipated was ascertaining the exact boundaries of the two peoples. The second proposal was based on topographical rather than ethnic considerations, and thus more easily recognizable. It would follow the Pibor river from its junction with the Sobat, thereby leaving a portion of the

1. Gwynn report, p. 3.

2. See, however, above, p. 66.

3. See report in FO 1/44, 7.7.00, published as "Surveys of the Sobat Region," The Geographical Journal, XVII (1901), pp. 495-512; and in even greater detail as Among Swamps and Giants in Equatorial Africa; An Account of Surveys and Adventures in the Southern Sudan and British East Africa (London, 1902). Although initially given warm welcome and all possible assistance on his way to Gore, he later met obstruction from Tassama's representative, Qañazmach Walda Gabriel. Harrington protested; Minilik gave fresh instructions to his officials to assist Austin in all possible ways, threatening severe punishment if they failed to do so. The qañazmach was subsequently summoned to Addis Ababa and publicly flogged: FO 141/353, Harrington to Cromer, 1.4.00; Austin, Among Swamps and Giants, pp. 26, 28, 35.

Nuer to Ethiopia. The line would then extend along the Akobo river. In any case Austin considered a Pibor-Akobo boundary the minimum that Sudan should claim. He felt cession to Ethiopia of the "worthless tract" of Nuer territory between Anyuaa country and the Pibor could be counter-balanced by demanding concessions in the south, in the Lake Rudolf region. However, what Austin considered most desirable from the Sudanese point of view, but felt would surely be highly objectionable to the Ethiopians, was a boundary along the edge of the Ethiopian escarpment, giving all the plains to the Sudan. He knew that the Ethiopians would strongly object to such an arrangement because the lowlands provided their natural hunting and raiding ground. But it was to remain an idea that more than one Sudan government official would entertain, even after the boundary was demarcated roughly along the lines suggested by Austin.

On the question of a sanatorium on the Ethiopian plateau for the Nasser garrison, a point which Rodd had suggested earlier in connection with the Fazughli garrison,¹ Austin was discouraging. The absence of a road from the Baro valley to the escarpment made communication well-nigh impossible.² With regard to the possible construction of a Khartoum-Uganda railway (a much reduced version of the famous Cape to Cairo dream),

1. See above, p. 70.

2. He must have looked with a great deal of foreboding at that escarpment, which claimed more than half the pack animals he had taken along with him during his journey.

Austin suggested that it should be kept within uncontested Sudan territory, rather than require the leasing of ground from Ethiopia for the purpose - a point also emphasized in an earlier memorandum by Rodd.¹ Minilik was later persuaded to permit railway connection between Uganda and the Sudan across Ethiopian territory.²

Austin also recommended that navigation rights along the Baro should be insisted on, as an inducement to trade with the Anyuaa and the Oromo. Even more significantly, he suggested that a "trading station, with the consent of the Abyssinians, might be established at Itang, in the centre of the food-producing districts, as the locality is a charming one, and far healthier than Nasser."³ In this we see the first expression of the idea that was later to materialize as the Gambela trading post, the most important and tangible aspect of Ethio-Sudanese relations in the twentieth century.

Transmitting copies of the two reports, Salisbury authorized Harrington to conclude an agreement in September 1900. The minister was given discretionary powers to make concessions "provided that the Anglo-Egyptian Government obtain a line suitable for the establishment of a chain of frontier posts between the Sobat and the Blue Nile." Special attention was to be given to the question of Lake Tana and Nile waters, navigation rights on the Nile, and railway connection across

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1. FO 1/44, Rodd to Salisbury, 4.8.99.
 2. FO 1/45, Gwynn to Talbot, 1.2.01.
 3. FO 1/44 Austin report, 7.7.00.

Ethiopia.¹

In early 1901, a draft treaty incorporating most of the recommendations by the two survey parties was ready for signature. The fate of Qessan, lying between Fazughli and Bela Shangul, was left for a joint boundary commission to settle. In the south the boundary was to follow the Baro until its junction with the Pibor. Then it was to go along the latter river to its junction with the Akobo, and along the Akobo to Melille - very much in line with Austin's recommendation. A provision was made against any interference by Minilik with the waters of Lake Tana or the Sobat that would visibly diminish the flow of their waters into the Nile. Minilik was also to agree to the lease of an enclave in the Itang area for commercial purposes, and to railway connection between Sudan and Uganda across his territory. Freedom of navigation on the Blue Nile and the Sobat rivers was to be guaranteed, and both parties pledged to do their utmost to encourage trade between the two countries.²

In essence, the draft agreement was much the same as the treaty that was later signed on May 15, 1902; interestingly enough, though, the mutual pledge to encourage trade was omitted in the final draft. Minilik was later to lose Qessan, whose ownership had been contested by Tur al Guri, Minilik's vassal, and the nakk of Fazughli, owing allegiance to the

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1. FO 1/44, Salisbury to Harrington, 29.9.00.
 2. For draft treaty, see FO 141/361, Harrington to Rodd, 25.5.01.

Sudan.¹ But he gained some more territory between Jebel Abu Ramlah and Gallabat.² The most intractable point, however, was the delimitation of the northernmost section of the boundary, where Italian interests were involved. And it was Italian objection that was to delay signature of the treaty for more than a year.

Despite Harrington's indignation at his Italian counterpart for putting, as he put it, "a spoke in my wheel," the British could hardly claim they did not see things coming. Rodd foresaw it.³ Cromer had already provided for it, and negotiations were started in Rome.⁴ He even cautioned Harrington not to press matters, underlining the importance of prior agreement with Italy.

Detailed investigation of this rather involved question is beyond the scope of this thesis. Its only importance for western Ethiopia, if any, is in delaying the signature of the treaty. Basically, the issue revolved around the question of where the boundary between Ethiopia and the Sudan was to begin in the north. What made it complicated was that the boundary between Ethiopia and Italian-occupied Eritrea was also awaiting delimitation. So there was an area that was the subject of a

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1. See testimony gathered by Bimbashi Smyth, who had accompanied Gwynn in a second survey in 1901; FO 1/45, app. II, 1.5.01.
 2. A map illustrating the alternative lines proposed is available in PRO MPK 180. The "Boundary Recommended" in the map in actual fact became the line that was eventually agreed upon in the final treaty. I am grateful to my friend, Abdul Majid Hussein for giving me access to some of the maps in his collection.
 3. FO 1/44, encl. in Rodd to Salisbury, 4.8.99.
 4. FO 141/347, Cromer to Harrington, 21.10.99.

triangular contest, although Minilik could hardly be said to have figured very much in the dispute, choosing rather to sit the whole thing out. The matter was largely confined to the two powers.

Theoretically, the Anglo-Italian protocol of April 1891, defining their respective spheres of influence, should have at least provided a framework for settlement of the issue. But, like the other protocol that had been signed by the two powers a month earlier, it had been overtaken by events.

An independent Ethiopia, fresh and confident after the victory of Adwa, had vigorously pushed its frontier far to the west of the 35°E longitude set as the line marking the British and Italian spheres of influence by the protocol of March 1891.

Britain, the immediate loser, felt Italy should tolerate a retraction of her sphere in the north as provided by the protocol of April 1891.¹ This, in essence, is what actually

happened. An exchange of notes between the two governments in December 1899 pushed the line far to the east of the 1891 line which had followed the course of the Atbara until its intersection with lat. $14^{\circ} 52' \text{N}$. A line from Todluc on the Gash to Umbrega on the Setit was agreed upon as the initial stretch of the boundary between Ethiopia and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. That Minilik and Cicodicola, the Italian representative in Addis Ababa, had tentatively agreed on a line from Todluc to Tomat on the Setit-Atbara junction as the boundary between

1. See, for example, FO 1/44, Currie (the British ambassador in Rome) to Visconti-Venosta (the Italian foreign minister), 6.12.99.

Eritrea and Ethiopia in November 1899 seemed to have escaped the notice of both governments, or to have been silently ignored.¹ But this was not the immediate problem. The Italian objection was based on the ground that the draft treaty, providing for a line from Todluc to the Maïeteb-Setit junction, violated even the December 1899 agreement between the two powers.

Nor was it just an arid territorial dispute. Involved were also ethnic boundaries and trade routes. The British wanted the Hamran Arabs, whose anti-Mahdist record they gratefully acknowledged, entirely in the Sudan. The Italians wanted the Kunama securely within Eritrea. They attached equal importance to the Setit-Maïeteb trade route, which the line proposed in the draft treaty would have placed out of their sphere. In preferring the Setit-Maïeteb junction to Umbrega, the British adduced the arguments of territorial limits of the Hamran Arabs, topographical convenience, and a flaw in the map of the Anglo-Italian agreement in 1899; the last point, they argued, was the source of the whole misunderstanding.²

In November 1901, a compromise solution was found. At first it was suggested that the frontier line be drawn

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1. One thus fails to see Harrington's surprise (FO 1/45, Harrington to Lansdowne, 27.4.01) at the Italian representative's protest at the Todluc-Setit-Maïeteb line.
 2. FO 141/364, Wingate's memo on frontier negotiations, 9.5.01; FO 1/45 Harrington to Lansdowne, 27.4.01.

"from Todluc to a point on the Setit, somewhat to the east of Ombrega". Later it was modified to leave the Gondar trade route to the Setit - including the town of Nogara - on the Ethiopian side, as Ethiopian control of the trade route was more acceptable to Italy than British control. "In return for this extension of Abyssinian boundary, British Agent in Ethiopia will work in concert with Italian Minister to obtain an extension of territory to the east of Todluc-Maieteb line so as to include in Erythrea the whole of Cunama tribe up to River Mareb." An agreement to this effect was duly signed by the two powers on November 22.¹

The treaty that was eventually signed on May 15, 1902, incorporated these points. Where Khor Um Hajar meets the Setit, about half-way between Umbrega and the Setit-Maieteb junction, became the starting point of the Ethio-Sudanese boundary. The annex to the treaty modified the Tomat-Todluc line of the Ethio-Eritrean boundary. The new line was to start from the Um Hajar-Setit junction and follow the Setit to the mouth of Khor Maieteb. It was then to be drawn to the junction of the Mareb and the Mai Ambessa, leaving the Kunama people in Eritrea. An article in the Giornale d'Italia hailed the agreement as a victory for Italian diplomacy: English pressure on the Setit has been pushed further to the west;

1. FO 1/46, Currie to Lansdowne, 20.11.01; FO 1/45, Lansdowne to Buchanan, 29.9.01, reporting on a discussion of the matter at the Foreign Office in a meeting attended by Cromer, Wingate and Harrington.

the danger of Italian communication with the Lake Tana area being cut off averted; and Italian sovereignty over the Kunama secured. Rodd, protesting to the Italian foreign ministry, deplored the fact "that either party should claim as a diplomatic victory what was in reality an arrangement of mutual convenience."¹ Others doubted if Italy had made a good bargain by exchanging for the Kunama the parallelogram including the Hamran Arabs and stretching to the Atbara, which she could in any case claim by virtue of the 1891 protocol.²

The southern section of the boundary, as finally delimited, followed Austin's second recommendation³ in toto, the rivers Baro, Pibor, and Akobo forming convenient boundary marks. Most of the Anyuua and a small section of the Nuer found themselves on the Ethiopian side. Further north, Minilik retained the Watawit sheikhdoms of Khomosha, Gubba, Asosa and Bela Shangul. The treaty put, however, a permanent seal on his ambition towards Fazughli. Even Qessan, south of Fazughli, was ultimately placed on the Sudan side, though it had been equally contested by the neighbouring sheikhs on both sides.⁴ Further down, Jebel Jerok, stronghold of the Khomosha ruling family, though assigned to Ethiopia by treaty, was

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1. FO 1/46, Rodd to Lansdowne, 17.6.02.
 2. Geographische Zeitschrift, IX (1903), pp. 113-4. Ethiopia gained most from "this rather tawdry colonial squabble," according to David Hamilton, Ethiopia's Frontiers: the Boundary Agreements and their Demarcation, PhD thesis (Oxford, 1974), p. 297.
 3. See above p. 93-4.
 4. See above p. 96.

incorporated into the Sudan by Gwynn's subsequent demarcation.¹ He had foreshadowed this step when, in a report in 1901, he said that "it will probably be found necessary to place it [i.e. Jebel Jerok] on the Sudan side of the line".² Smyth, his assistant, had expressed the ultimate in imperial arrogance when he said: "Taken as a whole, the Watawit of Dul can not be regarded as deserving of any consideration, if it should appear expedient to draw the boundary line through their midst."³ This cavalier handling of what the Khomasha rulers considered their legitimate rights created one of the most intractable problems on the Ethio-Sudanese boundary.

The articles that evoked the greatest interest in international circles were the third and the fifth, which were generally regarded as big concessions by Minilik and testimony to the diplomatic skill of Harrington.⁴ Article V gave the British the right of railway connection across Ethiopia between their two territories, Uganda and the Sudan. By Article III,

1. Faisal Ali Taha, The International Legal Aspects of the Boundaries of the Sudan with Ethiopia and Kenya, PhD Thesis (Cambridge, 1973), p. 372.

2. FO 1/45, encl. in Wingate to FO, 24.9.01.

3. SIR 84, app. B.

4. "Die Grenzberichtung von Abessinien," Deutsche Rundschau für Geographie und Statistik, IV, 25 (Leipzig & Vienna, 1903), p. 466; M. Rouire, "L'Ethiopie, l'Angleterre et l'Italie: les derniers traités anglo-italo-éthiopiens," Révue de Géographie, LII (Paris, 1903), p. 315; G. Vasco, ("La delimitation de l'Abyssinie," Révue française de l'étranger et des colonies et exploration, XXVIII (Paris, 1903,) pp. 197-9) pays tribute to the astuteness and perseverance of Harrington and deplores the poor quality of French diplomatic representation, which he considered was largely responsible for British preponderance and the decline of French influence in Ethiopia.

Minilik made a pledge "not to construct or allow to be constructed" any work which would diminish the flow of the Nile waters to the Sudan. With the French threat on the Upper Nile effectively rebuffed four years before, this, one would say, was a gratifying end to the British quest for security, even total mastery, on the Nile. "Almost as though by an act of God," one historian observed in this connection, "the fruit of empire which had defied the efforts of France and Italy dropped gently into the hands of General Kitchener and Colonel Harrington, and thence as gently into the Cap of the British Empire." The treaty marked, he went on in his inimitable style, "the end of the political and strategic struggle between European States for the Nile Valley.... the coping-stone ... upon the work of Rhodes and Chamberlain, for it gave to Britain all that the most imperialist of imperialists could desire between the Second Cataract of the Nile and Uganda."¹

By Article IV, Minilik agreed to lease an enclave in the Itang area for the establishment of a commercial post. Woolf, writing some fifteen years later described it as a convenient provision for "the economics of imperialism."² But, at the time, it aroused little interest. It was generally likened to the enclave leased to the French by the English on the Niger.³ But, interestingly enough, the enclave was seen

1. Woolf, pp. 202-3.

2. Ibid., p. 202.

3. See Boniface I, Obichere, West African States and European Expansion (Yale, 1971), pp. 241ff, 266-67, for the French enclave.

more as a potential station on the Sudan-Uganda railway than as a trading post that would thrive on its own.¹

This is not to say, however, that the importance of trans-frontier trade as a significant feature of Ethio-Sudanese relations in the future was lost to the signatory parties. Minilik, in a letter to Wingate of May 1, 1901, undertook to do his best to promote trade between the two countries.² Wingate, replying about two months later, even went further and ventured the thesis of a prosperous trans-frontier trade as an effective safeguard against the prevalence of frontier raids. He also promised to do his best to encourage traders by removing all obstacles that they might encounter.³

The frontier governors evinced an equally keen interest in trade. Dajach Damiss confided to Gwynn during his survey in 1901 that the Sudan route could compete successfully with the Jibouti one, as the coffee-producing regions were mostly in the west.⁴ Further north, Ras Wole had an even grander design. "I inform you," he wrote to Sheikh Muhammad Sharaf

1. Vasco, p. 198; Gwynn, in his report on his first survey (FO 1/44, encl. in Wingate to FO, 2.9.00), had also suggested that "A trading post might perhaps be conceded by the Abyssinians at the head of the navigable Sobat on the same principle as has been adopted on the Niger."

2. DUR 100/5.

3. CRO Intel 2/17/146, Wingate to Minilik, 25.6.01. The Amharic translation of the letter, as Wingate told Abuna Mattewos in an accompanying note, is rather poor.

4. FO 1/45, encl. in Wingate to FO, 24.9.01.

of Gallabat, "that I have instructed the merchants to carry on buying and selling as far as Egypt. Will you also inform your merchants to buy and sell as far as Entoto and Shoa?".¹ Even before the treaty was signed the regulation of Gallabat trade - and particularly the question of customs collection - had been the subject of frequent discussion between the two governments.²

Viewed in this context, Article IV had a background of mutual interest in transfrontier trade that both governments professed. One can even go back further in time and see, two decades earlier, the Dutch traveller, Juan Maria Schuver, entertaining an almost prophetic vision of what later materialized as the Gambela trading post. He had a grand project of drawing the whole of western Ethiopia into the commercial orbit of Khartoum.³

In conclusion, how would one evaluate the boundary that was eventually agreed upon? Harold Marcus expresses admiration for the diplomatic skill of Minilik and Harrington; he concludes his article by saying: "The care taken in these negotiations can still be appreciated in the fact that the border exists today much as it was set in 1902 and remains undisputed in a part of the world where present border disputes are largely the result of misjudgements in the creation of frontiers around the turn of the century."⁴ Aside from the dispute that was to

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1. FO 141/364, encl. in Wingate to Cromer, 5.1.01.
 2. See correspondence in FO 141/353, 356, 371.
 3. "Reisen", p.20.
 4. "Ethio-British Negotiations", p. 94.

erupt between the two governments in the late 60's¹ - which he might not perhaps be blamed not to have foreseen - decades of frontier raids were to make the boundary little more than a cartographical exercise. A French writer foresaw the problems that would ensue as a result of the independence of the frontier peoples from central control, and even postulated a British invasion of Ethiopia using the raids arising from this as a pretext.² The man who was probably most directly involved in the delimitation of the boundary, Major Gwynn, had few illusions about it. He regarded it as a modus vivendi, as something that could only be said to have provided "a working basis for future dealings between the two Governments, which was about all that could be hoped for at the time." Only adequate policing could have enforced respect for the boundary, which, under the circumstances, the lack of effective administration on both sides made an extremely difficult, if not impossible, task.³ The history of the frontier peoples to forge their own destiny, often in manifest disregard of what the two governments regarded as their mutual boundary, forms the subject matter of the following chapters.

1. See Faisal, pp. 337ff, 435ff; Hamilton, p.307.

2. Rouire, p. 313.

3. "Frontiers of Abyssinia," p.159.

CHAPTER 2

Frontier Administration: the Southern SectorAnyuua Political Organization

In 1904, a traveller commenting on the double pressure exerted on the Anyuua by the Nuer on the one side and the highland Ethiopians on the other, predicted their absorption by either of their powerful neighbours in a few years' time.¹ Yet, throughout the period under study, they were to play a decisively independent role in the area. Even more, they were to menace the Nuer and defy Ethiopian government control. There was indeed a dramatic reversal in the balance of power, and the Anyuua were catapulted from near extinction to ascendancy.² The explanation commonly given for this sudden rise to power of the Anyuua is their acquisition of firearms from the highland Ethiopians. But few sources elaborate on this. Only Evans-Pritchard attempts to formulate a theory of how the introduction of firearms affected Anyuua political organization. Unlike his masterly study of the Nuer, his investigation into Anyuua political history is rather sketchy and often hypothetical.³ All the

1. Jessen in SIR 200, Mar 1911, app. A.

2. CRO Civ Sec 112/3/10, Intel, Dept.; Evans-Pritchard, System Political/ p. 14; SIR 200, Mar 1911.

3. There are also some errors of judgement, as when he describes Akwei, certainly one of the most independent Anyuua nyiye as "an agent of the Ethiopian Government." (p.13).

same, it provides a reasonably coherent context within which to discuss this most interesting phase of Anyuaa history.

Until about the turn of the century, which marks the beginning of the large scale introduction of firearms into the area, the village had been the largest political unit. According to Evans-Pritchard, the introduction of firearms, beside giving the Anyuaa technical superiority, broke down "the autonomy of village groups." A few leaders were able to establish hegemony over a collection of villages. Of these, the three most important were the cousins Udial, Illimi and Akwei. They were all nobles (nyiye, sing. nyiya), as opposed to the more common form of chieftaincy among the Anyuaa, which was that of village headmen (Kuaari, sing. Kuaaro). Of the three, Udial, rechristened Abba Chali by the Ethiopians grew up to a position of paramountcy. He had his base in Abobo on the Aluro river, about three miles south of Gambella.¹ His proximity to the plateau gave him easier access to firearms. According to one report, "His people probably have more rifles than men."² But his power and influence soon grew too much to the liking of the Ethiopian authorities. He was detained by the Ethiopian authorities in 1906, his people disarmed and the kuaari owing allegiance to him made independent.³

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1. He was variously referred to as "King of the Anuaks" (CRO Civ Sec 112/3/10, Intel. Dept.; SIR 200, Mar 1911) and "Head Sheikh of the Abyssinian Anuaks" (Gleichen, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 331).
 2. SIR 217, Aug 1912, app.A
 3. Ibid.; CRO Civ Sec 112/3/10, Intel. Dept.; SIR 200, Mar 1911. Evans-Pritchard associates Udial's decline to defeat by the Nuer (p.92), presumably in reference to an abortive raid that he led against the Woratong Nuer. See below, p. 116.

The second nyiya, Illimi, had his base near the Akobo-Ajibur junction. His growth in stature corresponded to the decline of Udial, but came to an abrupt end when he was killed in one of the series of Anyuaa raids on the Nuer in 1911. But admittedly the most colourful of the three, and the one who eventually rose to unrivalled prominence, was Akwei. His base was at Adongo, the centre of the Anyuaa royal clans. Udial's decline and Illimi's death strengthened his position and he was able to secure possession of the royal emblems which had been a bone of contention among the three rivals. Of these emblems the most important were a stool and a bead necklace. Akwei's strength can be gauged by the fact that at the time of his death in 1920, he was able to make the unprecedented step of ensuring that his son would inherit the emblems.¹ Imprisoned in Bure by Ras Tassamma for growing too independent, he managed to escape in 1903. He is said to have introduced some of the administrative forms he had seen in the highlands. The abundance of elephants in his country provided him with the ivory that was so vital to secure fire-arms in exchange. He established a personal monopoly over the arms trade, attacking any of the chiefs under him who dared to encroach on it. He was also able to attract a number of shiftas from the Ethiopian highlands and deserters from the Sudan forces, thereby injecting skill and expertise into his swelling ranks.²

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1. Evans-Pritchard, Political System, pp. 51f, 94. According to oral information from Majid, Illimi was killed in a battle with Akwei. Aug 1912, app. A.
 2. SIR 217, Aug 1912, app. A; CRO Civ Sec 112/3/10, Intel. Dept.

A major raid on the Nuer in 1911 and an effective rebuff of a punitive patrol subsequently sent by the Sudan government established him convincingly as a great power on the Akobo. He managed to elude a large Ethiopian force in 1916 and died virtually independent in 1920.

Other less important chiefs were Ameir of Perkom, on the Aluro river; Ushan, Agua, and Shamo, all in the Gog district just north of the Gila river (the last mentioned spent a period of captivity in Gore); and Ajilo of Itang. Ujullu, on the right bank of the Baro, defied Ethiopian authority for most of the period, despite his proximity to Gambella. Not surprisingly, his relations with Udial, the nyiya most steadfast in his loyalty to the Ethiopian authorities, were marked by a great deal of enmity. Olea, not very far from Itang, was ruled by a "queen".¹

The Bramly Scheme

The delimitation of the boundary in 1902 placed most of the Anyuaa on the Ethiopian side. But this was not followed by effective administration, just as the Sudanese side remained unadministered for almost two decades after the delimitation. True, the Ethiopians made their presence and authority felt in one way or another. Tribute-gathering expeditions which were

1. C.W.L. Bulpett, A Picnic Party in Wildest Africa (London, 1907), p. 127. A list of the nyiy and kuaari is given in SIR 217, Aug 1912, app. A.

scarcely distinguishable from raids kept the Anyuua in constant dread of the highlanders.¹ In 1905, one such raid by Tokkon, the Oromo balabat based at Bure, claimed the lives of twenty-four men in the village of Itang. The kuaaro, Ajilo, went to Tawfikia to complain, only to be told that he was under Ethiopian authority and that the Sudan government could not interfere in what came under Ethiopian jurisdiction.² Somewhat later, Major Darley, captured by the Anyuua at the Akobo-Oboth junction, claimed that he escaped execution "owing to my speaking no Arabic, my knowledge of the Abyssinian language and last but not least of being the bearer of Abyssinian passports."³ Some Anyuua leaders assumed Ethiopian titles and Ethiopian dress.⁴ Also, the Ethiopian authorities showed their power by detaining two of the most important nyiye, Udial and Akwei. But all this was far short of establishing sound and effective administration. The Anyuua country was more like a sphere of influence, and less like an administrative unit of the empire. For the highland Ethiopians, the lowlands for long signified little more than a natural hunting ground for elephants and slaves. Dajach Jote reputedly got more than 100 pieces of ivory per day in the form of tribute during the paying season.⁵

It was the arms trade which the Sudan government

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1. Bulpett, pp. 39, 153; SIR 200, Mar 1911.
 2. SIR 134, Sept 1905.
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/67, Darley to commandant Akobo Post, 26.6.12.
 4. E.g. the rulers of Gog and Digina were said to have been dressed like highland Ethiopians: Bulpett, p.165; the leader of the Anyuua who captured Darley had the rank of grazmach: CRO Intel 1/14/67, loc.cit.
 5. Birhanu, p.18; O.I. (Makurya)

particularly viewed with alarm, as it had dangerous implications for its own hold in the south. About 1911, the total number of rifles in Anyuaa possession was estimated at between 10,000 and 25,000.¹ In 1930, the Gaajak Nuer alone were estimated to have 10,000 Gras rifles. The only problem was inadequate supply of ammunition.² Thus, although it could hardly be said to have put its own house in order, the Sudan government started putting pressure on Minilik to tidy up his own. Barely a few years after the 1902 boundary agreement had been signed, it began to regret the placing of the Anyuaa on the Ethiopian side. It started the long quest for frontier rectification to put the Baro Salient (as it came to be known) under Sudan administration.

Initially, it approached Minilik either to sell or lease the area or cede it in return for compensation elsewhere along the frontier.³ Thus Minilik was offered Zeila in return for the Baro Salient.⁴ Rebuffed on this, the British were content to press for the appointment of a British officer to administer the Anyuaa country on behalf of Minilik. Presumably, Minilik himself at one stage entertained the idea of such an arrangement for the border districts, though more in connection with Bela Shangul than with the Baro Salient. He is even said to have thought of leasing Bela Shangul to the Sudan.⁵

1. DUR 301/6/1, Wingate to Kitchener, 7.12.11.

2. DUR 212/15, Willis note, 1930.

3. FO 141/409, Harrington's note, 1.1.07.

4. GFM 14/13, Zintgraff, 4.5.08.

5. FO 141/378, Cromer to Harrington, 3.5.03. Given the tenacity with which he fought to retain it during the boundary negotiations (see above, Ch.1) this seems improbable.

At any rate, early in 1907, Minilik tentatively agreed to the appointment of a British officer to administer the Anyuasa country and to collect tribute. He was to receive an annual salary of £1200 and was to be directly responsible to the Emperor. It was also stipulated that no Ethiopian was to enter the area without the officer's knowledge, a proviso probably intended to ensure a close watch on arms traders. If the experiment proved successful, it was to be repeated in other frontier districts, notably Bela Shangul.¹

The Sudan government responded with alacrity to what it considered a "distinctly favourable" offer.² Captain A.W. Jennings Bramly, who had earlier served in Uganda and the southern Sudan, was detailed for the post. Bramly presented himself to Minilik in late June, 1907. He was given a warm welcome, placed directly under the Emperor, and told to make preparations to assume his post.³ The project, however, soon run into difficulties. The matter was tied up with the question of Jebel Jerok, whose unilateral inclusion into the Sudan by Gwynn Minilik had not forgotten,⁴ the more so as he was pressed by the relatives of Wad Mahmud, the local ruler. Harrington advised its cession back to Minilik. Wingate refused on grounds of strategy, security and prestige; he expressed

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1. FO 141/409, Harrington's note, 1.1.07.
 2. FO 141/409, Cromer to Wingate, 11.1.07.
 3. FO 141/409, Hohler to Wingate, 26.7.07; CRO Intel 2/18/50, Bramly to DI, 28.8.07.
 4. See above, pp. 101-2.

readiness to do so only if Bela Shangul, like the Anyuua country, was to be administered by a British officer.¹ Earlier, Harrington had proposed using a series of frontier raids into the Sudan as pretext for obtaining from Minilik his consent to British administration of the frontier districts. Wingate, however, was not ready to go along with a proposal which "smacks of holding a pistol at Minilik's head." He felt that the project would have a better chance of success if Minilik could support it out of genuine conviction that it would augment his revenue.²

Whatever Minilik's private feelings about the project, it could only evoke unequivocal opposition from his two governors most directly affected by it: Ras Tassamma of Illubabor and Ras Walda Giyorgis of Kafa. For Minilik's gain in revenue through greater central control would have been their loss. According to one account, Ydlibi, the Syrian-born merchant who was to become a figure of considerable influence on the western Ethiopian scene, also played a role in bringing about the débacle. He concocted a plan by which Minilik broke - or was forced to break - his earlier engagement to give the Bramly scheme a trial. In a conference which had all the appearance of a pre-arranged plot, the two rases threatened to resign their official functions if the project was given the go-ahead. Much to the chagrin of the British minister, Harrington,

1. FO 141/409, Harrington, 10.1.07.

2. FO 141/409, Wingate, 28.5.06.

who was present, Minilik declared his preference for the services of his governors to a somewhat dubious scheme.¹

X On June 1, 1908, Bramly left for the Sudan in frustration and with the verdict that "the feudal system is still very strong in this country. Each Ras is practically an autocrat in his own country and the older Menelik gets, the less inclined and the less able he is to exercise suzerain power."² Thus ended the first major attempt by the Sudan government to exert a direct influence on Ethiopian frontier administration. Hardly four years elapsed before a series of major Anyuua raids on the Nuer forced it to make a second attempt.

The Anyuua Raids of 1911

There were premonitions of the raids. The Anyuua with the boost to their morale and confidence that the freshly acquired firearms had given, were expected to strike at their one-time oppressors, the Nuer, in retaliation for the years of harrassment and raids they had suffered in their hands. In 1910, Wingate was lamenting his inability to spare more troops for the southeastern frontier to cope with the border disturbances

1. Manuscript autobiography of Qañazmach Majid Abud, a copy of which is in my possession. On the career of Majid, see below, pp. 139-45. Majid claims he took the secret message from Ydlibi to Ras Tassamma in Gore and thus gained the ras's favour and an estate in the province. He told the same story to the German traveller, Max Grühl. See the latter's account, The Citadel of Ethiopia: The Empire of the Divine Emperor, trans. Ian F.D. Morrow & L.M. Sieveking (London, 1932), p.72.

2. CRO Intel 2/18/150, Bramly to civ.sec., 16.5.08.

that he anticipated would follow Minilik's death.¹ The Nuer had also began building fortifications and arming themselves in anticipation of imminent raids from "their formerly despised neighbours".² In fact, as early as 1902, a party of fifty Anyuua led by Udial had attacked the Nuer village of Woratong. The Anyuua were overwhelmed and forty of them killed. At this stage, rifles seem to have been scarce; only eight of the fifty Anyuua were armed with muzzle-loaders. Significantly, some of the Anyuua had adopted the clothes of the highland Ethiopians and had been given instructions in musketry and drill by what were supposed to be members of the Marchand expedition returning from Fashoda.³

There were altogether four incidents, all taking place in the early months of 1911. In the first, in May, thirty-five Nuer from Koratong were killed and forty of their cattle captured when they went to the village of Tirgol to remonstrate against repeated Anyuua depredations of Nuer settlements. The second incident involved a raid led by the Anyuua heads of Kweichar and Tirgol on the Nuer village of Goh; five men were killed, one hundred women and children and three hundred cattle were captured. The same party made another raid on the village of Yor killing thirty men and capturing a greater number of women, children and cattle. The third and major raid was led by Akwei followed by three hundred

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1. DUR 290/2/1, Wingate to Hogler, 23.2.10.
 2. SIR 194 & 200, Sept 1910 & Mar 1911.
 3. SIR 98, Sept 1902, app. B; see also Gwynn report in FO 1/47, 27.6.03, Evans-Pritchard, Political System, p.11.

riflemen. Up to two thousand cattle were captured.¹

Wingate's first reaction to the raids was to revive the Bramly scheme, as he felt that the only effective solution to the problem was "strong and permanent administration of the Anuak country and the Galla districts contiguous to the frontier." Kitchener, on the other hand, advised against raising a question that could easily be used against the Ethiopian government by its opponents.² Simultaneously, Wingate pressed for the demarcation of the section of the Ethio-Sudanese boundary between Melille on the Akobo and Lake Rudolf which, until then, was still undemarcated. In early 1911, when the Ethiopian government asked for it, Wingate had been suspicious of its motives. The memory of Ethiopian non-cooperation in 1908 when the matter was raised and the fear of incurring any further expenses after the costly reversion of the Lado enclave to the Sudan had induced him to oppose the idea of demarcation.³

What forced Wingate to change his mind was the intensity of the Anyuua raids and the unrestricted trade in arms and ivory on the undemarcated frontier that they implied. To the Sudan government, this extensive arms traffic was not only a menace to Nuer security (as the Nuer were not as well armed as the Anuyaa) but also put the whole Gambella trade in jeopardy.⁴ Thus in September, 1912, it was decided to approach

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1. FO 371/1043, patrol report in Wingate to Kitchener, 7.12.11; also SIR 204, July 1911.
 2. FO 371/1043, Wingate to Kitchener, 7.12.11; Kitchener to Wingate, 14.12.11.
 3. FO 371/1043, Thesiger to Grey, 15.3.11; Wingate to Cheetham, 27.5.11.
 4. FO 371/1043, Wingate to Kitchener, 7.12.11.

the Ethiopian government to send a delegate to meet a Sudanese team at Lake Rudolf in February. The demarcation was then to proceed northwards. The lake was chosen as the starting point for two reasons: the unsettled nature of the Anyuua and Beir country to the north, and the availability of a Sudanese team after completing its task of rectifying the Sudan-Uganda boundary.¹ The Ethiopian government was not able to obtain a representative before June, which led to the abandonment of the whole plan, as the Sudan government was not ready to bear the financial burden of maintaining the Sudanese team for five more months.²

Concurrently with his push for the demarcation of the boundary, Wingate was sending a gunboat patrol up the Pibor and the Akobo. The patrol had the rather grandiose task of punishing the Anyuua, especially Akwei, putting an end to the arms trade, and gathering information necessary to frame an administrative policy for this unadministered part of the Sudan.³ Wingate envisaged not only a raid on Adongo, Akwei's capital, but also control of the Boma plateau and the establishment of posts along the frontier.⁴ Asser, his

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1. FO 371/1293, FO to Thesiger, 17.9.12; Wingate to Thesiger 25.9.12.
 2. FO 371/1293, Thesiger, 16.10.12; Kitchener to Grey, 14.11.12. As late as 1921, the boundary still remained undemarcated, as a despatch of Stack to Allenby indicates: FO 371/5501, 26.2.21.
 3. SIR 211, Feb 1912; CRO Civ Sec 112/3/10, Intel. Dept., 1914; CRO Intel 1/14/66, Clayton to Asser, 12.12.11.
 4. FO 371/1043, Wingate to Kitchener, 7.12.11; CRO Intel 1/14/66, Wingate to Asser, 1.12.11.

adjutant general, was, on the other hand, sceptical of the wisdom of establishing posts "in a country inhabited by people we know to be unusually intelligent, and said to be possessed of good arms estimated at from 10,000 to 25,000 rifles, suffering, as we hope some of them will be and some already are, from losses inflicted by us."¹ Events bore out his scepticism.

The patrol, consisting of two companies, set out in February. It had eleven British and twenty-one Egyptian officers and four hundred and seven members of other ranks. On March 15, the patrol met a strong Anyuaa force of about seven hundred rifles near Adongo. The skill and determination with which the Anyuaa fought caught the Sudan forces by surprise. Although Adongo was attacked and temporarily occupied, Akwei and his Anyuaa followers proved too elusive for the definitive and quick victory that the patrol had hoped for. Ultimately overwhelmed on the field, the Anyuaa retreated to the swamps. Akwei went on to rouse up the chiefs of Nyikan and Jur to resist the intruders, assuring them that "if they fought lying down in the low grass, they were sure to win, because ... the method of the Government troops was to shoot standing up."² The Anyuaa loss was about eighty

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/66, Asser to Wingate, 8.12.11.
 2. SIR 212, 213, 214, Mar-May 1912; O.I. (Majid); also CRO Intel 1/14/68, Wauhope to governor UNP, 27.5.12. Major Leveson, the officer in charge of the patrol, attests to Anyuaa fighting skill, saying they were "firing from the knee and taking cover well": CRO Intel 1/14/66, Leveson

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killed; but the loss on the British side, involving four commissioned and thirty-seven non-commissioned officers, was even more severe.¹ The patrol was eventually forced to give up its pursuit of the Anyuua, the projected Boma reconnaissance was totally out of the question. For all practical purposes, the patrol had failed in its mission. Wingate was only trying to make the failure less disagreeable when he appointed Leveson "Military and Civil Commander of that portion of Sudan Territory inhabited by the Anuak and Beir tribes, including the Boma Plateau."² One can hardly think of a better expression for the loose and amorphous nature of Sudan government control - or the total lack of it - in this section of the frontier.

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report, 27.3.12. Wingate however fumed at Leveson's underestimation of the Anyuua, adding, "It was the height of indiscretion for him to separate himself from the Main Body as he did, and dash into the thick grass. A few scouts well in advance and the rest of the M.I. kept well behind with the Main Body, was the only thing to do, and after getting information on the presence of the Anuaks, the only way to deal with them would have been with Sudanese Infantry." DUR 181/1/1, Wingate to Asser, 24.4.12; c.f. Wingate to Hamilton, 10.4.12. A German report from Cairo also expressed admiration for Anyuua guerrilla tactics and described Leveson's dash as emulation of Anyuua style of fighting. GFM 14/14, Miguel to Hollweg, 28.7.12.

1. CRO Intel 1/14/66, Leveson report, 27.3.12. Another source, describing the battle of Adongo as "a real tough one", puts the patrol's loss at 25% of the total force: CRO Intel 1/14/66, Russell to Symes, 18.3.12.
2. CRO Intel 1/14/66, Wingate, 11.5.12.

1. CRO Intel 1/14/67, Wingate to Stark, 7.3.12.

2. CRO Intel 1/14/67, British Agent to Wingate, 2.6.12.

3. GFM 12/12, German Legation (1912/13), to Berlin 13.6.12.

The Sudan authorities thus became convinced that only by a kind of pincer movement, involving joint action by the two governments, could they beat the guerrilla tactics of the Anyuaa. But, before beginning operations, they decided to send a reconnaissance force up the Gila river. Ethiopian consent for what amounted to a Sudan military presence in its territory was not readily forthcoming. The Ethiopian government, it appears, was more inclined to explore the possibilities of peaceful disarmament of the Anyuaa; it was not prepared for the military confrontation that the Sudan government policy seemed to entail.¹ The British Agency in Cairo could not contain its dismay at what it regarded as wanton dilatoriness on the part of the Ethiopian authorities: "Are the Abyssinians absolutely determined," it exclaimed, "to do practically nothing to discharge their responsibility for British and Egyptian officers and Men having been killed by Anuaks who obtain refuge and security in their territory."² According to one report, the British gave the Ethiopians a 24 hour ultimatum on 11 June, 1912, to bring the "offending" Anyuaa to justice or face the crossing of the boundary by Sudan government forces in pursuit of the same.³

Finally, in the middle of June, Ethiopian consent for the reconnaissance was given - on five conditions. These were that the reconnaissance force was to consist of only two

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/67, Wingate to Stack, 7.5.12.
 2. CRO Intel 1/14/67, British Agency to Thesiger, 8.6.12.
 3. GFM 14/14, German legation (Addis Ababa), to Berlin, 13.6.12.

gunboats of not more than forty soldiers each; that the reconnaissance was to be concluded before the end of the rainy season; that it was to involve no offensive action; that the Ethiopian government was in no way responsible for any possible Anyuua attack on the force; and, finally, that the operation was not to be used as a precedent for later similar action.¹ The Sudan government agreed to all the conditions. Accordingly, two gunboats left Akobo for the Gila on 2nd July. Earlier, as agreed previously, an Ethiopian observer party had joined the force. As it turned out, the reconnaissance did not last a month. The party returned to Akobo on 21st July, after proceeding 150 miles up the river. What the reconnaissance revealed was the power and independence of the Gila Anyuua. They possessed up to 1500 rifles. They exhibited a high degree of independence. Although they generally acknowledged that they were under Ethiopian jurisdiction, not all of the chiefs complied with the order to send representatives to meet the party. Their raids on the Nuer they regarded as merely a matter of settling old scores and hence not subject to any "international arbitration". True, they were told by the reconnaissance team, with a combination of threat and diplomacy, that their raids were not to be tolerated. But they were hardly expected to be cowed by these gestures. As one Sudan

1. CRO Intel 1/14/67, Asser to Pearson, 16.6.12.

government official put it, "a more material demonstration will be found to be necessary before the problem of this tribe is settled."¹

The "more material demonstration", Sudan felt, would be achieved if the Ethiopian government could be induced to engage in a combined operation which would effectively sandwich the Anyuaa. In fact, the Sudan government's position on this point was little short of ambivalence at best and duplicity at worst. Wingate attributed the "success" of the Gila reconnaissance to the fact that it was, barring the token Ethiopian presence, a solo Sudanese exercise. Ethiopian participation, he felt, would have degenerated into a slave raid.² Yet, throughout the preceding four months, he was assiduously pursuing precisely that participation. Early in January, he explained to Thesiger that the Ethiopian government should not only bear the frontier violations that the gunboat patrol up the Akobo would possibly make in its pursuit of the Anyuaa, but should rise to the occasion and cooperate by undertaking their general disarmament.³

Some form of agreement providing for joint operations was presumably concluded in Addis Ababa.⁴ As early as 19th April, Wingate noted: "I dare say we shall get a certain amount

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/67, Wauhope to govr UNP, 20.7.12; see also SIR 217, Aug 1912.
 2. DUR 182/2/2, Wingate to Butler, 11.8.12.
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/66, Wingate to Thesiger, 9.1.12.
 4. Majid, p.7.

of our dirty work done for us, at any rate the wretched Anuaks, who are a very fine tribe, are likely to suffer between two fires."¹ Five days later, he was pushing Captain Kelly to Gambella to witness the projected Ethiopian expedition, adding sardonically: "I expect they will skin the poor Anuaks clean, not only of their rifles, but of everything else, but it does not do to be squeamish about this as we must stop arms coming into the Sudan by hook or by crook."²

Towards the end of April, Captain Kelly proceeded to Gambella to meet Dajach Kabada, governor of Gore, and to arrange the details of the combined operations. He was also instructed to obtain as much information as possible with regard to the arms and liquor traffic among the Anyuua. A report on the possibility of reviving the Bramly scheme was also expected from him. As to his general conduct, he was enjoined to exercise the utmost tact and prudence for fear of arousing Ethiopian suspicions about the intentions of the Sudan government.³

Meanwhile, Dajach Kabada had left for Bure with instructions to seek the peaceful submission and voluntary disarmament of the Anyuua leaders, and to resort to force only if that policy failed. Anxious that the Ethiopian troops should not cross the boundary, Thesiger had arranged for an Ethiopian drive in a north-easterly direction from Melille,

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1. DUR 181/1/2, Wingate to Herbert, 19.4.12.
 2. DUR 181/1/1, Wingate to Asser, 24.4.12.
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Clayton to Kelly, 21.4.12.

thereby following a line parallel to the clear boundary marks of Akobo and Pibor. He had also impressed on Kabada and other officials that all rifles confiscated should be sent to Addis Ababa and not left with the Anyuaa leaders, adding that "I would judge the success of the expedition by the number of rifles brought in."¹ The disarming of the Anyuaa was thus to be the primary objective. And the gaps of doubt and suspicion which Thesiger's diplomacy left were conveniently filled in by the spiritual injunctions of the abun, the Coptic head of the Ethiopian church. He was at hand to give the Ethiopian government "very sensible advice as to the necessity of friendship with the Sudan" and to assure it of the sincerity of the latter's intentions. The British Minister was so exultant in this combination of diplomatic and spiritual offensive that he stated that Anyuaa disarmament was a matter of a few months.²

But Sudan government officers closer to the scene saw little ground for exultation. True, plans were made for a five-column advance along the rivers Baro, Gila, Aluro and Akobo, led by Fitawrari Makonnin, Qañazmach Damte, Fitawrari Mashasha, Qañazmach Tokkon and Fitawrari Burayu.³ But they never materialized. Kabada, while in Bure, received orders from Addis Ababa not to go down to the plains. Instead, he

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Thesiger to Wingate, 16.4.12.
 2. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Thesiger to Grey, 19.4.12.
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Kelly to ADI, 18.6.12; SIR 215, June 1912.

was to summon the Aryuua leaders to Gore and persuade them to surrender their arms peacefully. The order to return to Gore was greeted with relief, as the highlanders had scarcely ever relished the prospect of campaigning in the lowlands anyway. With inadequate supplies and the approaching rains, the project had even less to commend it.¹

By mid-June, only two leaders had surrendered; Udial, the principal nyiya, had ignored the summons.² To make things even worse for the Sudan government, on the arrival of Kelly in Gore to arrange the details of the operations with Kabada, the latter was not to be found. He had gone to Gimira on orders from Lij Iyasu to give support to Dajazmach Mulugeta, the local governor, who at the time was confronted with an uprising of the Gimira people. Kelly could not help concluding: "I fear there is no doubt we have been fooled over the whole affair."³ All hope of offensive action from the Ethiopian side was abandoned, except possibly after the rains. Fitawrari Burayu, whose troops constituted a vital contingent of the Ethiopian force, withdrew, complaining that his men were dying of fever. Kelly was pessimistic of Ethiopian action even after the rains. He doubted

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Walker to civ sec, 23.5.12; Kelly to ADI, 18.6.12, 28.6.12; SIR 215, June 1912.
 2. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Kelly to ADI, 18.6.12.
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Kelly to Walker, 25.6.12; Kelly to ADI, 28.6.12; also Majid, loc. cit. According to Thesiger (annual report for 1912 in FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 20.1.13), Kelly himself was partly to blame, as he did not arrive in time to effect the rendez-vous.

if the Ethiopians had intended more than a distant show of force in the first place; Burayu's 300-man contingent, supposed to form the main body of the Baro column, had only seventy rifles. His final word was direct intervention by the Sudan. "Unless permission is given to Sudan Columns operating if necessary within Abyssinian territory," he concluded, "I fail to see that any good could be done."¹

Meanwhile, considerations of a commercial nature were in effect pushing the consul at Gambella towards endorsing Ethiopian non-action. Already, the arrival of Fitawrari Burayu's force had precipitated the desertion of the trading post by the Anyuaa depriving it of its source of fresh supplies and labour. If it came to a showdown between the Anyuaa and the Ethiopian troops, he feared, Gambella was bound to suffer either way. The Anyuaa would attack it in despair if they were defeated or in euphoria if they were victorious. They were also in a position to disrupt the postal service which passed through their territory and to cut water communication by sniping at steamers. Walker could see no lasting solution to the problem of the arms trade short of a fundamental change in the Ethiopian political system:

"It seems to me that the whole question lies in the present system of Abyssinian Govt. With independent provinces and no standing army, and without any organized Treasury supervision throughout Abyssinia, it is difficult to see how the carrying of arms or their possession can be regulated.

1. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Kelly to ADI, 30.7.12.

Where no regular soldiers are paid, the central Government has no control and the possession of arms is looked upon as a kind of rank."¹

Inconclusive as the Sudan operations were, they provoked a parliamentary question in London which, significantly, queried (among other things) "whether the [Anyuaa] country is known to possess any resources capable of agricultural, mineral or commercial development."² In Ethiopia, there were wide-spread rumours of an impending Sudanese invasion, which partly explains the lukewarmness with which the overtures for combined operations were greeted by the Ethiopian government. They were largely responsible for its initial reluctance to approve of the Gila Reconnaissance.³ The Germans, too, strongly suspected the British with some dubious designs on western Ethiopia.⁴ The British minister emphasized to both Khartoum and London the need to keep the Ethiopians informed of the exact scope and nature of Sudan government operations, lest they hear of them from other sources in an exaggerated form. "The Abyssinians," he stated, "are passing through a phase of extreme nervousness with regard to the Soudan, and the widest rumours as to the intentions of the latter and of the presence of British troops in Abyssinian territory have been circulating here for the past few months and are eagerly received by the

1. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Walker to Thesiger, 2.7.12.

2. CRO Civ Sec 112/3/10, 15.4.12.

3. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 20.1.13.

4. GFM 14/13, Schubert to Hollweg, 27.10; Richthofen to Hollweg, 20.7.11.

mass of the population."¹

Nor could these apprehensions be said to have been entirely without foundation. Kelly, in a note written after his trip to Gore which ended in frustration, suggested that the time was opportune to revive the Bramly scheme. But there is a major difference between the original project and what Kelly recommended. While the initial idea was for a British officer to administer the Anyuaa country, Kelly envisaged effective Sudan occupation of the area, as he felt appointing a British officer within Ethiopian forms of administration would be injurious to British prestige.² There is also a curious statement by Kitchener which tends to reinforce the above. Replying to Wingate on the question of joint action with Ethiopia, he said: "Keep out of combined operations until we are clearly in the saddle, that is in possession of the country that is to be handed over and of course nothing must be said about this until matter has been arranged in Egypt - we can then discuss the necessity without complications

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1. FO 371/1283, Thesiger to Grey, 12.7.12; Thesiger to Wingate, 11.7.12; CRO Intel 1/14/66, Thesiger to Wingate, 7.9.12. In late 1913, there were fresh rumours of a Sudanese invasion, arising from an article in a Greek newspaper published in Alexandria. The article recommended the despatch of 50,000 Anglo-Egyptian troops under Kitchener to invade Ethiopia and solve once and for all the problem of arms smuggling into the Sudan. FO 371/1572, Thesiger to Grey, 27.11.13. Cf. DFM 14/14, Richthofen to Hollweg, 14.7.14.
 2. DUR 182/2/2, 10.8.12.
 4. DUR 182/3/1, Assef to Wingate, 2.9.12; Correspondence to Wingate, 6.9.12.
 5. DUR 122/3, Wingate to Thesiger, 25.9.12.

which otherwise might be unpleasant."¹ Further insight into Sudan government intentions is gleaned from a note by Major Darley, who had spent a number of years in Gimira and the Anyuua country, arguing for the maintenance of the Akobo boundary. He puts forward a number of points against the occupation of the whole Anyuua country by the Sudan - which suggests that the idea was in the offing.²

These apprehensions of a Sudanese invasion might have been one of the factors that brought about the change in Sudan government policy: basically from war to diplomacy.³ But there were other reasons for the change. The most important of these must have been the resilience and fighting prowess of the Anyuua themselves. Some sections of the Anyuua had also shown a conciliatory attitude towards Sudan government authorities.⁴ Another important consideration was the danger that continuous military activities posed for Gambella trade, "which we have been at such pains to foster and develop."⁵

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1. DUR 122/3, Wingate to Clayton, 30.8.12.
 2. Summarised in Notes on Frontier by Hugh D. Pearson, who had taken part in the Gila reconnaissance, DUR 122/5, 8.9.12. Among the arguments he adduced were Ethiopian rights over the territory, the problem of administering the whole Anyuua people, and the fact that Sudan take-over would only bring the frontier "nearer Abyssinia where every man has a rifle and cartridges are largely used for small change."
 3. Wingate ordered his acting director of Intelligence "to choke off" any idea of a military expedition in autumn; DUR 182/2/2, Wingate to Butler, 19.8.12.
 4. DUR 182/3/1, Asser to Wingate, 2.9.12; Cornwallis to Wingate, 6.9.12.
 5. DUR 122/3, Wingate to Thesiger, 25.9.12.

The success of this new policy, however, hinged on the Ethiopian government earnestly pursuing its professed programme of peaceful disarmament of the Anyuua¹ - a condition which one observer found absurd as the Ethiopians were only delighted to hear that Sudan government forces had been defeated by the Anyuua and were liberally supplying the latter with arms.² But it was more than a case of sadistic pleasure by the Ethiopian officials at the administrative problems of their Sudanese counterparts. Ethiopian officialdom had a vested interest in the arms and ivory trade. A vigorous policy of disarming the Anyuua would have been tantamount to financial suicide. The British minister in Addis Ababa, who had the task of prodding the Ethiopian authorities to push ahead with the policy, had no illusions about this. The remedy to the situation, he felt, lay in the Sudan extending its administration to its south-eastern frontier and establishing police patrols to check the arms and ivory trade. Alternatively, he proposed that the Sudan government should encourage the establishment of licensed ivory traders on the Sudanese side of the boundary. This, he argued, would divert the ivory trade "into its proper channel" and deny raiders from the Ethiopian side their pretext for boundary violations.³

Kelly himself, in a detailed report which he submitted subsequent to his futile mission to Gore, admitted the complexity

1. Ibid.

2. DUR 122/5, note by Darley, Aug 1912.

3. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 20.1.13.

of the problem. To the highlanders, elephant-hunting had come to signify a combination of social status and economic gain. The hunters, who were generally soldiers of one of the governors, bartered guns for ivory. Moreover, the frontier peoples invariably paid their tribute to the governor in the form of ivory, and they were sometimes given arms and ammunition to augment their tribute. And even for the big import-export traders, the ivory trade had become one of the most profitable businesses in Ethiopia. It was thus "visionary" to expect the Ethiopian authorities to enforce a vigorous policy of control of the arms trade. The best that could be expected from many quarters was non-cooperation; the worst was fierce opposition. Despite official pronouncements of readiness to stop the arms traffic in higher government circles, the objective condition - independent or semi-independent frontier governors, who, in the absence of regular salaries, had to provide for themselves as best they could - made such utterances idle talk. The solution, Kelly concluded, was effective administration of its frontier districts by the Sudan government.¹

A few months after Kelly returned from Gore in frustration, an incident occurred which nearly provoked the kind of strong Ethiopian offensive against the Anyuua that the Sudan government had been calling for for so long. This was the killing of Lij Kasa, the government representative in the Anyuua country, by a group of Anyuua early in 1913. A one-time **officer** in the Italian police in Eritrea, he

1. SIR 235, Feb 1914, app.B

had escaped from prison in the Italian colony where he was serving a fifteen year term for murder and had come to the Anyuua country about 1906. Through his unique knowledge of the area, he commended himself to Dajach Kabada, governor of Illubabor, who appointed him over the Anyuua.¹ The immediate reason for his death was a fracas involving his followers and a party of Anyuua from Itang. It developed when one of Kasa's soldiers assaulted an Anyuua woman who had refused to give him water. In the ensuing mêlée, Kasa lost his life.² But this particular incident had behind it a background of Anyuua discontent at Ethiopian rule in general. Some Anyuua had reportedly expressed their determination to do away with Ethiopian oppression once and for all and to pay no more tribute.³ But most Anyuua were willing to pay tribute, only resenting the manner of its collection by the Ethiopian authorities, which made it scarcely distinguishable from raiding.⁴ Kasa had also incurred the hostility of Ajilo of Itang, a number of whose men he had imprisoned. Walker, the British consul at Gambella, even raised the possibility of the complicity of Ethiopian officials in Bure and Gore in the death of Kasa; he had not particularly endeared himself to his superiors by by-passing their authority and communicating

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Kelly to ADI, 10.8.12.
 2. Majid, p.12; CRO Intel 1/12/55, report of acting governor UNP, 8.7.13.
 3. CRO Intel 1/12/55, report of acting govr. UNP, 8.7.13.
 4. Ibid.; CRO Intel 2/25/199, report by Bimbashi Gibson, June 1913.

with Addis Ababa via Gidami.¹

The Ethiopian government reaction, when it came, was a specimen of poor coordination. The traditional dispute between Gore and Sayo officials over jurisdiction in Gambella and the environs became a major stumbling block to any kind of concerted action. Sixty soldiers of Dajach Kabada of Gore, and eighty six others from Sayo, who had arrived in Gambella by April 26, were engaged in mutual bickering over the possession of Gambella. A force of 1,500 soldiers from Gore, led by Grazmach Ingida, arrived on the 10th of May. It had secured the services of two important Anyuua rulers, Udial and Agua. But, the force from Dajach Jote which was expected to join it and make the combined thrust was still far away. The only representatives of Jote were forty Koma soldiers under the command of one of his brothers. The Gore force was subjected to hit-and-run attacks by the Anyuua and vexations obstruction by Jote's soldiers, who objected to its marching along the right bank of the Baro, claiming that it amounted to trespassing on Jote's territory. Dispirited, the Gore force returned to Bure on 14th May, complaining that Jote's contingent had failed to make the rendez-vous, which had been fixed for the 10th. The Anyuua burnt the deserted camp and returned to Itang in jubilation. On the 16th, Jote's force of 4000 spearmen and 1000 riflemen, commanded by his son, Solomon, arrived in Gambella. The following day, Solomon made a unilateral dash

1. CRO Intel 1/12/55, Walker to Thesiger, 13.3.13.

into the Anyuua country, only to recoil back three days later after incurring a loss of about a hundred men, including one of his brothers. Solomon was so confounded by the fighting skill of the Anyuua that he had to look for an excuse for his defeat. This he found in the Greek manager of the Baro Syndicate,¹ whom he accused not only of supplying the Anyuua with 20,000 rounds of ammunition just before the battle, but also of teaching them the technique of firing from rifle-pits. Accordingly, he set fire to a number of huts of the syndicate. Back in Sayo, Solomon resorted to what Walker called a "policy of pinpricks," putting a ban on all flour supplies to the Gambella enclave.²

Meanwhile the Sudan government was making its own reaction to the situation. In a telegraphic instruction to the governor of Upper Nile Province, Wingate enjoined what amounted to a policy of giving sanctuary to the Anyuua arguing that "our policy towards the Anuaks is not now hostile." All Anyuua fleeing from the impending Ethiopian retaliatory force were to be disarmed and given refuge. Any Sudan government patrol should not give them the impression that it was intended against them. At the same time, care should be taken to avoid any collision with an Ethiopian force which would cast doubt on the official government attitude of "sympathy and cooperation".

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1. Formed by Ydlibi after he got a concession to start plantations along the banks of the Baro. See below, pp. Intel 1/12/59, Wingate to govr UNP, 29.3.59.
 2. CRO Intel 1/13/59, Walker to govr UNP, 28.6.59; also FO 371/9985, Walker to Thesiger, 5.6.59; O.I. (Majid).

"In short," Wingate summed it up, "your action in general should be directed towards safeguarding our posts and protecting our tribesmen as far as possible without involving the Government in military operations or raising suspicions of our good faith in the minds of the Abyssinians."¹

Back in Gambella, the British consul was only too quick to draw the lesson of Ethiopian administrative impotence in the lowlands and to ask the Sudan government to send up a gunboat to protect the trading station. Allegedly with Ethiopian government consent, a gunboat was duly sent late in May, 1913. The inspector accompanying the gunboat was instructed to show the utmost caution in his conduct, lest he excite afresh Ethiopian suspicions of Sudan government intentions. As he was also dealing with what was regarded as "a regular civilized government," he was to avoid all complications which might jeopardize British policy in the country. He was to make no landing on Ethiopian territory, and he was to take all actions in conjunction with Ethiopian authorities.² The alleged Ethiopian consent to the despatch of the gunboat, however, was either a fabrication or had not been communicated to the local authorities. Whatever the case may be, the arrival of the gunboat provoked a strong Gambella, protest from Fitawrari Walda Maryam, the Ethiopian official in/ "You told me before," he wrote to Walker, the British consul,

1. CRO Intel 1/12/55, Wingate to govr UNP, 29.3.13., 14.5.13.

2. CRO Intel 1/13/55, ADI to priv sec, 20.5.13; civ sec to DI, 20.5.13.

"that a ship of war was coming to Gambela and I said that it could not come without permission and I warned you. Now not even sixty soldiers or even five soldiers may come without permission and I order this in the name of Menelik and Lij Iyasu. The station of Gambela was granted for merchants and not for soldiers."¹

The gunboat was accordingly withdrawn. In the background of Ethiopian opposition to the gunboats were doubts of the "good faith" of the Sudan government. The latter was even believed to have connived in the murder of Lij Kasa to create an unsafe situation and use this as a pretext to take over the Anyuaa country in the interest of Gambella trade. Lij Iyasu, Minilik's successor, was so convinced of British designs on Gambella that he was contemplating terminating their lease on the enclave, or at least arranging for an Ethiopian judge to share jurisdiction in it. Further, he disputed the boundary as demarcated by Gwynn, claiming that the latter had no Ethiopian counterpart during the demarcation. At this time also, Iyasu was beginning to reveal his pro-German sympathies; one sign of this was his idea of sending out German officials to the provinces to build up a modern administration. His preference for Germany he justified by saying that, beside being the most powerful state, she had no colonies adjoining Ethiopia and was hence less likely to have any

1. CRO Intel 1/12/55, Walker to inspector on gunboat, 14.6.13.

ambitious designs on Ethiopia.¹

After the debacle of Jote's force led by Fitawrari Solomon, there was for some time no major offensive against the Anyuaa. In March, 1914, Dajach Ganame, then governor of Gore, envisaged a plan of getting round the Anyuaa driving them towards the plateau from the west. He consulted Walker, wishing to know the exact position of the frontier. The latter gave him a map but was very lukewarm in supporting the plan. The idea was brilliant; its execution, however, proved a formidable task. As it turned out, Ganame's force did not even pass the Guma escarpment. Soldiers of Ras Tassamma, the old governor who died in 1911, who had formed a contingent of Ganame's force, refused to go down to the plains on the ground that the rainy season was approaching. The whole project was abandoned and Ganame had to content himself with making appointments over the Anyuaa country.² These, however, could not be a substitute for effective administration.

The net effect of this period of inconclusive confrontation was to give tremendous boost to Anyuaa morale. True, the raids from the highlands, often involving the plundering of seed and cattle, did not pass without leaving an impact on the Anyuaa economy. Anyuaa were seen going up to the plateau to seek employment or to buy maize.³ But

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1. CRO Intel 1/13/59, Walker to govr UNP, 1.6.13, quoting Fitawrari Mardasa Jote, "a violent and rather embarrassing friend of ours."
 2. CRO Intel 2/25/200, Walker, 10.3.14, 18.3.14, 16.4.14.
 3. CRO Intel 2/25/200, Walker to Doughty-Wylie, 25.7.14.

the knowledge of having effectively repulsed the offensives of the Ethiopian authorities bred in them a distinct contempt of the highlander's fighting capacity and his marksmanship. Even more alarming to both the Sudan and Ethiopian governments was a noticeable tendency towards a rapprochement between the Anyuua and Nuer, one-time inveterate enemies.¹ Writing in July, 1914, Walker pointed out two conditions for the success of any future Ethiopian offensive: Sudanese cooperation and prompt and thorough execution.² Majid Abud's campaigns in the first half of 1916 can be seen as efforts to attain the latter without any apparent concern for the former.

The Campaigns of Majid Abud

Majid Abud was a Syrian Christian who made his way into Ethiopia after a period of missionary activity in Arabia. One of the salient features of his work there was the obstruction he met from British missionaries. He first came to Harar in 1906 as an emissary of the Sultan of Lahaj to Ras Makonnin. He then joined a German traveller, Holz, on his way to Addis Ababa. After spending a jobless year in the capital, he was picked by his more lucky compatriot, Ydlibi, in 1907 and sent to Gore to work as an agent in his rubber concession.³ At

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1. Ibid.; CRO Intel 2/25/199, intelligence report by Gibson, accompanying the gunboat, n.d.
 2. CRO Intel 2/25/200, Walker to Doughty-Wylie, 25.7.14.
 3. Majid, pp. 3-4; for rubber concession, see below, pp.390-7.
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the same time he acted as agent of John Nicholas & Co., one of the firms actively engaged in western Ethiopian commerce, in which Ydlibi had a concern.¹

In mid-1914, Lij Iyasu, in apparent recognition of the peculiar difficulties of administering the Anyuua, appointed a separate governor over them. The person he chose as governor of the Anyuua country was none other than Ydlibi, who had managed to win his favour and confidence. But, Ydlibi, it seems, found the prospect of "exiling" himself as a distant frontier governor less exciting than pursuing his business interests in the capital. His subsequent appointment to the much more lucrative post of nagadras of Diredawa also diverted his attention in an altogether different direction. He was therefore content to delegate his authority to Majid Abud.

As was to be expected, the project met with strong opposition from Dajach Ganame, governor of the Gore province. A scheme which in effect limited his sway to the plateau by putting the low country under special jurisdiction was not particularly appealing to him. Not that he was very fond of the Anyuua; but because the Anyuua country represented the governor's chief source of profit, be it through the ivory and arms traffic or through the more orthodox customs revenues of the Gambella post. Majid was only too well aware of the need for adequate financial backing if his new appointment was to have any meaning. He kept on making enquiries to Addis Ababa about this. The record of previous Ethiopian government ventures into Anyuua territory, which had invariably

1. SIR 264, July 1916.

ended in stalemate or disaster, also gave him some food for reflection.¹ He could therefore only approach his new task with a certain amount of trepidation.

What eventually prompted Majid to act was a special message from Iyasu in May 1915 ordering him to go down to the plains at once and threatening punishment if he failed to do so.² His first act was to make his authority financially tenable. This he partially achieved by confiscating the bidru (canoes) of the Bonga Anyuua, who had provided the only transport across the ~~Baro~~ for trade goods between Gambella on the plains and Bure and Gore on the plateau. He also revived an old duty on goods in Gambella. He strengthened his initially slender force by opening his ranks to bandits and through an official authorization which secured for him Fitawrari Burayu's men from the Birbir area (north-west of Gore) and the redoubtable Anfillo cavalry. With forcible conscription among the Bonga Anyuua and the voluntary rallying of the Abobo Anyuua, led by nyiye like Udial, Majid's force swelled to some 1400 riflemen.³

Majid first sent out summons to the prominent Anyuua nyiye and kuaari to submit peacefully. Only a few leaders of

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1. Majid, pp. 7-8; also Grühl, p.77.
 2. SIR 264, July 1916, however, ascribes Majid's move to his conviction that the time had come to crush Ujullu, one of the independent Anyuua kuaari, when his men attacked and killed in Gambella a follower of Udial.
 3. Majid, pp. 7-10.

the Abobo Anyuua responded to his call. He followed this up with a reconnaissance of the Baro Anyuua who had consistently defied government authority. He had a mixed reception, ranging from the warm welcome of some who were won over to his side by the lavish gifts he sprinkled around to the distinct hostility of the people of Itang, who told him in no uncertain terms to return to Gambella or face disaster. Majid had to return. This formed the immediate background for the battle of Itang (20-21 March, 1916). The Anyuua had built themselves a stockade, and this, one could say, was to a large extent responsible for the tragic outcome of the battle.¹ At the outset, they nearly wiped out Burayu's men when the latter were duped by the tactical flourishes of the Anyuua to make a premature attack. Only a diversionary attack by Majid's men and the timely arrival of the Anfillo contingent saved the situation for Burayu. Eventually, a carefully coordinated attack by Majid's troops and the Anfillo contingent perplexed and overwhelmed Anyuua resistance. 532 Anyuua were killed and mutilated, compared to only fifty killed from Majid's side. His cunning and remarkable commanding ability prevailed over Anyuua valour and ingenuity. In a sordid feat of carnage, he asserted government authority.

He was not so successful in a subsequent follow-up campaign that he undertook. His targets were Ujullu, the

1. Majid's tactic was to avoid engagement outside the stockade as much as possible, preferring to surround and storm it. Majid, p.19.

one important kuaaro of the Baro Anyuua who was not cowed into submission by the bloody battle of Itang, and Akwei, the outstanding embodiment of Anyuua independence. It is an interesting illustration of the dual nature of Anyuua reaction to the Ethiopian government - resistance and collaboration - that Majid's force consisted largely of Anyuua who had acknowledged his authority, in particular the Anyuua of Abobo. The Oromo element represented by Burayu's men and the Anfillo contingent which had distinguished itself in the earlier battle, were missing. The absence of the latter's cavalry Majid felt acutely, as Ujullu continuously eluded him by a skilful use of the terrain. But what began with frustration ended with near disaster when Majid faced Akwei. An ambush nearly cost him his life and the Akobo river proved an effective barrier when he recovered from the initial shock to pursue his attackers. Majid's second campaign thus only had the effect of unsettling the less hostile Anyuua even further, as they fled from his advance for fear that it was directed against them - a state of affairs which was hardly conducive for his professed programme of instituting peaceful administration and encouragement of cultivation.¹

In the end, Majid had to return without achieving

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1. Not surprisingly, perhaps, in view of the setbacks that he encountered, Majid has only a passing reference to this campaign in his autobiography. Most of the above information is derived from a long and analytical report in the Intelligence files of the Sudan government, CRO Intel 2/23/183.
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any of his objectives. On his way back to Gambella, on 23rd May, he received a message from Ydlibi ordering him to transfer authority to Ganame's representative. The news, when announced later, is said to have been greeted with shock and surprise by his followers. Udial, who had proved to be Majid's most steadfast ally, was especially incensed to hear it and went to the point of refusing to recognise anyone else but Majid as governor of the Anyuua country. Soon after Majid's retirement to his estate, however, Udial bowed to reality and began obeying Fitawrari Fanta, Majid's successor. The reason for the rather summary dismissal of Majid is not clear. The anonymous Sudan Intelligence report provides four alternative explanations. The severity of his first campaign was one possible explanation. His failure to comply with Iyasu's order to repatriate the captured Anyuua immediately was another; instead Majid tried to achieve his programme of disarmament by making the royal order conditional on the Anyuua handing over rifles or ivory as the price for repatriation. A third view attributed Majid's removal to the triangular machinations of Jote, Burayu and Ganame, who all grudged him the "successes" he scored where they had so miserably failed. A fourth view, and one to which Majid himself subscribed, associated his fall with the declining political fortunes of his patron, Ydlibi.¹

Whatever the reason, Majid handed over power to Fitawrari Fanta, who greeted him cordially on his arrival at

1. Ibid.

Gambella on 11th June, sending him his own mule to ride on to the town. Fanta soon set himself to his task. He sent messages of reassurance to the fleeing Anyuaa including Ujullu, announcing the cessation of hostilities and urging them to return and rebuild their demolished settlements. Ujullu was unmoved.¹ He was to persist in his defiance when, some fifteen months later, he refused to respond to summons from Qañazmach Tokkon, then governor of the Anyuaa country, to meet him at Gambella. Later, however, in an interview during the governor's tour of the Anyuaa country, Ujullu made a formal apology for his record of hostility to the Ethiopian government, and agreed to respect its authority in the future.² Not much was heard of him thereafter.

The Position of the Gaajak Nuer

At this juncture, we may turn our attention to examine the fate of another people who, like the Anyuaa were subjected to pressure from both governments, and, again like the Anyuaa, succeeded in pursuing a more or less independent existence for most of the period under study. Unlike the Anyuaa, however, who were mainly to be found on the Ethiopian side of the boundary, almost all the Nuer were on the Sudanese side. The only exception were the Gaajak Nuer, a section of whom lived permanently on the Ethiopian side while other

1. Ibid. 218, Sept 1912.

2. CRO Intel 1/13/61, private letter from Gambella to ADI, 5.11.17; George Okbet (Gambella) to ADI, 8.2.18.

sections migrated to it seasonally for grazing.

The Anyuua raids of 1911 on the Nuer¹ were not only physically damaging but also psychologically traumatic. Traumatic because the despised Anyuua brought such havoc on their one time superiors. Once the shock was over, however, the Nuer reacted with remarkable resilience. While the British, theoretically their protectors, were sending their ponderous, and ultimately unsuccessful, punitive patrols, the Nuer were administering their own traditional code of justice. The Gaajak Nuer conducted a devastating raid on the Baro Anyuua as far as Itang, destroying cultivation and capturing up to 500 rifles.² In fact, the rate at which the Nuer were arming themselves was so alarming to the British that they began to change their policy from protection to disarmament. Yet, the former they were not in a position to offer; and the latter was meaningless without the former. One Sudan government officer was quick to observe this inherent contradiction. Commenting on an Ethiopian tax-gathering raid on the Gaajak Nuer carried out early in June, 1912, he wrote: "One result of the affair is to make it abundantly clear that no tax should be taken from the GARJAK NUERS until the Government is in a position to protect them from raids of this kind. Further it seems difficult to object to natives possessing rifles when they have to rely on their own powers to protect

1. See above, pp. 115-17.

2. SIR 218, Sept 1912.

themselves."¹

The raid that Kelly refers to was led by Ato Zarafu, the representative of Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis. The nagadras was temporarily in charge of the province of Dajach Jote, then in detention. Beside having the ostensible purpose of gathering tribute, the raid had the appearance of a northern column to the general Ethiopian thrust against the Anyuua that was then being contemplated,² although the British minister had been assured earlier that, in the interest of Gambella trade, there would be no operations north of the Baro. Yet, despite official protests at Zarafu's expedition, the British attitude wavered between concern for Gambella trade³ and the feeling "whether some slight interruption to the trade might not be more than counterbalanced by the disarming of a tribe situated on our border."⁴ At any rate, what Zarafu achieved through his raid was far removed from disarming the Nuer: among their precious booty captured from Zarafu's party was a machine gun. The Nuer lost some hundred men killed and about an equal number captured. Most of the captives were later recovered through a combination of British protest and Nuer diplomacy.⁵ Zarafu, on the other hand, lost more than

1. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Kelly to ADI, 15.6.12.

2. See above, pp.125ff.

3. CRO Intel 1/14/68, Walker to civ sec, 18.6.12.

4. FO 371/1294, Thesiger to Wingate, 20.7.12.

5. The Nuer recovered fifty of the women and children in exchange for 34 bulls and 3 tusks of ivory. SIR 218, Sept 1912.

250 of his men;¹ he further incurred a severe reprimand from Iyasu and subsequent dismissal.²

The following year, the Sudan government began contemplating the idea of sending a patrol to the Gaajak Nuer country. This was part of a general policy of the government to make its authority felt among the Nuer.³ But the whole matter was handled with a great deal of prevarication. Kitchener feared a repeat of the Adongo disaster.⁴ The sizer had to guard Ethiopian sensitivities.⁵ Wingate was the most determined. In requesting Kitchener's approval to the plan, he underlined the need to check the arming of the Nuer. An assertion of authority by the Sudan government, he said, was necessary to avoid "a loss of prestige that would have the gravest effect on the administration of the Nilotic tribesmen of the Sudan."⁶

Two questions remained to be solved: the claims of the Jote family to rights of sovereignty over a section of the

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1. Ibid., CRO Intel 1/14/68, Walker to civ sec, 18.6.12. Kelly (CRO Intel 1/14/68), letter to govr UNP, 18.6.12) gives the even higher figure of 387.
 2. SIR 220, Nov 1912; CRO Intel 2/25/199, Yahia Effendi Abu Bakr to Symes, 1.11.12.
 3. For a general and fairly lucid survey of British policy with regard to the Nuer, see Alexander Solon Cuasi, "Sudanese Resistance to British Rule, 1900-1920," MA dissertation (University of Khartoum, 1969); also DUR 212/10/1, Willis memo, June 1927.
 4. DUR 469/5, extract from Clayton to Wingate, 3.11.13.
 5. DUR 469/6/2, Clayton to Wingate, 30.4.14.
 6. FO 371/1880, Wingate to Kitchener, 5.4.14.

Gaajak Nuer, and, more important, the whole question of whether Ethiopian cooperation was to be sought in the operations. The British chargé d'affaires in Addis Ababa ruled out the latter, opting, if it could not be avoided, for Ethiopian observers on the patrol. As to the former, he came out with a brilliant solution: Jote might keep - i.e. enslave - those Nuer fleeing across the boundary from the patrol.¹ Ultimately, all this proved much ado about nothing. The outbreak of the First World War, forcing the British to turn their attention to more pressing and vital concerns, swept the whole project of the Gaajak Nuer patrol overboard.²

More exactly, the project was postponed, rather than abandoned for good. The idea was revived soon after the end of the war, repeated Gaajak Nuer raids on the neighbouring Burun in the meantime lending additional urgency to the matter. Unlike the somewhat half-hearted pre-war preparations, the Sudan government's approach to the whole thing was now marked by seriousness of purpose and ruthlessness of method. C.A. Willis, governor of Upper Nile Province (1927-30), described the patrol sent against the Gaajak as "the largest that had occurred in the South."³ First, support to the Gaajak from the Jekiang Nuer was neutralized.⁴ The patrol then launched a systematic destruction of the canoes of the Gaajak Nuer to

1. FO 371/1880, Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 6.6.14.

2. FO 371/2227, Wingate to McMahon, 14.1.15.

3. DUR 212/10/1, Willis memo, June 1927.

4. CRO Intel 1/16/76, frontier report, Jan 1920.

deprive them of means of escape to Ethiopia.¹ An interesting feature of this patrol was the use of aeroplanes in the reconnaissance and bombing of Nuer settlements. Thus on 9th February, sniping by about three thousand Gaajak Nuer provoked continuous bombing of eight hundred of them. On the next day, the Sudan government columns followed this up by burning about 2000 Nuer huts; their owners had disappeared into the swamps to the west. Five of the seven most important Gaajak Nuer chiefs were reportedly killed by the end of the whole operation.²

Further operations resulted in the capitulation on 25th March of another ally of the Gaajak, the Gargwang.³ Bombing was continued with the intention of dealing a final blow to the Gaajak Nuer. But Nuer resistance was stubborn, activated by the most independent-minded of their leaders, Shen Mut Dung.⁴ The Gaajak, who had already effectively repulsed Ethiopian pressure, were no easy prey to the Sudan government forces, either. About 2500 of them were armed with rifles. Although the operation claimed 115 Gaajak Nuer lives, they managed on the whole to beat superior technology by skillful use of their terrain. The most that the Sudan government troops could eventually achieve was the establishment

1. SIR 304, Nov 1919.

2. CRO Intel 1/16/76, frontier report, Feb 1920

3. " " Mar 1922

4. " " Apr 1920

of a post "in the Gargwang country in close touch with the people who are in turn in close touch with the Garjak." In an even more candid confession, the report goes on: "It was apparent that the troops could do nothing more to bring the Garjak into submission, if the latter intended to adopt a policy of passive resistance protected by the Abyssinian swamps."¹ Only their hasty recrossing of the boundary as soon as the troops withdrew and the attendant Royal Air Force bombardments forced a considerable section of the Gaajak to submit. Mut Dung, with his considerable influence, kept on defying Sudan government authority.² Nevertheless, the operations of 1920 marked the beginning of the end of Gaajak Nuer independence. But the ultimate integration of the region into the Sudan was achieved less by military might than by a policy of peaceful penetration. This involved the institution of civilian administration and the revival of traditional forms of political and social organization.³

The Anyuaa Royal Stool

On the Anyuaa side, after the eventful years of 1911-1916, the situation was relatively quiet. In 1925, one

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1. CRO Intel 1/16/76, frontier report, June 1920.
 2. Ibid.
 3. A&P, vol. 13 (1923), Report on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of the Soudan in 1921, Cmd. 1837; DUR 212/10/1, Willis memo, June 1927.

Sudan government official even reported "absolute contentment" among the Akobo Anyuua traditionally reputed for their resistance to alien rule, Sudan or Ethiopian.¹ The relation of the Anyuua with their neighbours was also marked more by friendship and fraternization than by hostility. This, as far as the Sudan government was concerned, was gratifying when it meant cessation of the traditional Anyuua raids on the Beir, but alarming when it signified Anyuua Nuer alliance, which had rather dangerous connotations.²

With regard to extending Sudan government authority to include the Anyuua, the British attitude ranged from the traditional casting of covetous eyes in that direction to official disclaimers of any ambitious designs. "If by any rectification of the frontier," Bacon wrote wistfully, "one could secure complete control of this tribe, I believe a prosperous future would lie before them, as they are an agricultural and intelligent people."³ On the other hand, a suggestion two years later by the daughter of Ydlibi, then trying to curry British favour to renew her father's concession, that the Anyuua were desirous of throwing off Ethiopian rule and coming under British protection, met strong disapproval. "It would, I consider, be disastrous," wrote the British minister in Addis Ababa, "if any British Official should in any way do anything to encourage these people, who live well

1. Bacon report in SMIR 374, Sept 1925.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Bacon expresses similar sentiments in a letter to the War Office, Khartoum: CRO Intel 1/14/62, 10.4.19.

within the Abyssinian frontier, to think that they could count upon British support or even sympathy if they should rebel against their lawful Government."¹ The governor-general of the Sudan was equally unequivocal in his denials of any designs on the Anyuaa. Casting doubt on the accuracy of the suggestion of Anyuaa insubordination, he affirmed: "The Sudan Government has never contemplated and could hardly undertake their administration."² Such statements, made against a background of elaborate proposals for "rectification" of the boundary envisaging a Sudan government take-over of the Baro Salient in exchange for the Boma and Tirma Plateaux further south,³ can only be interpreted as due either to the concerned officials being inadequately informed on the issue or to a deliberate camouflage of intentions.

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1. FO 371/12339, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 13.1.27.
 2. FO 371/12339, governor general to Lloyd, 23.3.27.
 3. See app. to SIR 321, Apr 1921. The proposal goes on to point out the comparative advantages of the "rectification" to both governments: land and water access to Itang, acquisition of the Gila river, complete control of the Gaajak Nuer and the Anyuaa for the British; acquisition of the healthier plateau country, which in any case was too remote to be administered from the Sudanese side, for the Ethiopians. See illustrative map in PRO MPK 353. Later, in February 1939, the Anglo-Egyptian authorities were to revive the proposal. The Italian government, then occupying Ethiopia, rejected it as too excessive. Negotiations along the same lines continued after 1946. See Faisal, pp. 388, 391ff. For earlier expressions of dissatisfaction with the northern section of the frontier, see Nickerson report in SIR 145, Aug 1906, and SIR 250, May 1915, app. A, "Notes on Abyssinian Frontier of Sennar Province" by Motsyn & Blyth.

Aside from grander designs of the kind mentioned above, the contest between the two governments for Anyuua allegiance revolved around the stool, the most important symbol of Anyuua kingship. Akwei, who until his death persisted in his policy of independence through passive resistance, had possession of the royal emblem. The Ethiopian authorities backed the claims of their steadfast vassal, Udial, a rival to Akwei. But Udial died suddenly while accompanying Fitawrari Fanta, the Ethiopian official in charge of the Anyuua, in one of his tribute-gathering expeditions in 1919. This meant a considerable increase in the power and influence of Akwei. The Ethiopian authorities then started supporting Ugwak, son of the late Udial, as a rival to the throne.¹ In November 1921, Ugwak was in fact permitted to sit on the stool during a visit to Adongo. On his return, however, he was attacked by his brother, Gilo, lost his position in Abobo, and, spurned by the authorities in Gore, died a broken man in Gambella in May 1922.²

This was after the death of Akwei sometime in late 1920 or early 1921.³ He was succeeded by his son, Sham Akwei,

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Bacon to WO Khartoum, 10.4.19.
 2. SIR 328, Nov 1921; SIR 332, Mar 1922; SIR 334, May 1922. Reasons given for the attack were Ugwak's alleged sale of his own people into slavery, his raid on a Majangir village and enslavement of the fifty captives, and his arrest of some Oromo messengers who had brought a parcel (of clothing or ammunition) to Gilo. SIR 332. Only the last reason seems credible, in view of Gilo's own notoriety as a slave trader. See FO 371/11572, Marsh to Willis, 2.5.26.
 3. C.R.K. Bacon ("Kingship amongst the Anuak," SNR IV (1921), pp. 162-64) gives the date as October 1920. A Sudan Intelligence report for November 1920 records a raid into Ethiopia led by Akwei; his death is mentioned for the first time only in February 1921: SIR 319.

a youth of twelve, whose succession was disputed by other contenders. Sudan government influence among the Anyuua began to grow thereafter. The first representative of the government to visit the district after 1912 came in 1922.¹ But the voluntary submission of the nyiye to its authority was to elude it until the end of this period. In March 1931, Sham Medda of Ajwara, who seems to have taken over power from Sham Akwei, absconded to the Ethiopian side, with the Anyuua throne in his possession.² The Sudan government responded by intimidatory RAF flights over the Anyuua villages and the appointment of another nyiya to succeed Sham Medda. The latter in the meantime was protesting his loyalty to the Ethiopian government and accusing the Sudan government of burning his village. Ras Mulugeta, the governor of Gore, was apparently unimpressed and ordered Sham Medda to return to his village in the Sudan, at the same time asking the Sudan government to forgive him for his recalcitrancy. Sham Medda accordingly returned to Akobo, the seat of local Sudan government power, on 26th February, 1932, and handed over the royal emblems.³ In April 1933, Sham Medda escaped from custody in Akobo "in spectacular circumstances" and started rallying followers in the Adongo area. But a reconnaissance plane sent out in December is said to have demoralised him and he gave himself up in January 1934. Thereafter, Anyuua

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1. DUR 212/14/4, Willis, UNP handbook (ms.), 1930; cf. DUR 212/10/2, Willis memo, June 1927.
 2. SMR 27, Mar-Apr 1931.
 3. SMR 28, Apr-May 1931; SMR 33, Sept-Oct 1931; SMR 37, Jan-Feb, 1932.

resistance seems to have subsided. The district commissioner of Akobo, touring the Adongo country after Sham Medda's surrender, could describe the attitude of the Adongo Anyuua as "most satisfactory."¹

The Gambella Agreement of 1932

It was mainly from the Giro Anyuua of the Gila-Akobo region that the last spectacular defiance of government authority in this period was to come. It took the form of two extensive raids on the Beir in March 1932 some fifty miles deep inside Sudan territory. The Anyuua used as pretext for their raids the murder of one of their kin, who had gone to trade in the Beir country.² All earlier indications of an Anyuua-Beir rapprochement were thus nullified at a stroke.³ Twenty-seven Beir were killed; another twenty-seven women, fifty-five children and eight hundred head of cattle were captured. Four of the captives as well as eighty-two head of cattle, taken by the Akobo Anyuua who had also participated in the raids, were recovered immediately by the district commissioner of Akobo.⁴ The Sudan government then started

1. SMR 59, Nov-Dec 1933; SMR 63, Mar-Apr 1934.

2. Majid, p.25; FO 371/16098, encl. in Huddleston to Lorraine, 30.6.32.

3. Cf. above, p.152 ; also SIR 400, Nov. 1927. For an earlier Anyuua raid on the Beir, with some Oromo support, see SIR 218, Sept 1912.

4. The Times, 14.6.32. FO 371/16097, Visc. Hailsham answering a parliamentary question, 1.6.32.

protesting to Addis Ababa to repatriate the captives remaining in the hands of the Ethiopian Anyuua and to pay blood-money for those killed in the raids. The Ethiopian government first denied any knowledge of the incidents, but eventually agreed on a negotiated settlement at Gambella.¹ To Sir Harold MacMichael, civil secretary of the Sudan government, the whole incident was further confirmation of the need for Sudan government take-over of the Baro Salient.²

In June 1932, a meeting of representatives of the two governments was held at Gambella - on a steamer on the Baro to be exact - to settle the question of repatriation of the captives and compensation for the dead. The Sudan delegation was led by A.G. Pawson, governor of the Upper Nile Province. The Ethiopian side was represented by the governor of Illubabor, Ras Mulugeta, and the governor of Sayo, Fitawrari Hayla Maryam, known as "Holy Mary" to the Sudan delegation.³ The Sudan delegation asked for compensation amounting to 118,642 MTD, the return of all captives, and the punishment of the Anyuua involved in the raids. This was met with some objection from the Ethiopian side, particularly from Fitawrari Hayla Maryam.⁴ Finally, a compromise settlement was reached.

1. FO 371/16098, Barton to Simon, 31.5.32.
2. FO minutes to above.
3. Private communication from Mr. Pawson, 15.11.73.
4. Ibid. Apparently "Holy Mary" did not live up to his name as far as the Sudan delegation was concerned. For Mulugeta, an "educated polished gentleman" who was more accommodating, Mr. Pawson has only praise.

The governor of Illubabor accepted responsibility for the incidents and agreed to pay fifteen head of "full-grown" cattle for every Beir killed, instead of the cash earlier demanded by the Sudan government. He also agreed to ensure the repatriation of all captives by 1st May, 1933. The Ethiopian delegation rejected, however, the idea of a clause providing for the punishment of the Anyuua involved in the raids being inserted in the agreement, but agreed that such a clause be submitted for the emperor's approval.¹

Acceptance of responsibility implied assertion of rights. Especially so when the person chosen to implement the agreement was none other than Majid Abud. What was viewed as a drab, though admittedly dangerous, task of locating and restoring captives Majid converted into a dramatic confrontation with the Sudan government and a vigorous reassertion of Ethiopian jurisdiction along the boundary. In a preliminary reconnaissance of the country along the right bank of the Akobo that he undertook in August 1932, he was more busy giving lectures to the Anyuua on the

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1. FO 371/16098, encl. in Lorraine to FO, 29.6.32; Huddleston to Lorraine, 30.6.32; Erskine's report in Barton to Simon, 18.7.32. The emperor is eventually reported to have agreed to the punishment clause, FO 371/16098, Mack to Maffey, 16.8.32. There was, however, little punitive action from the Ethiopian side, save some operations in connection with the restitution of the captives. The Sudan government on its side went ahead with elaborate preparations for the contingency of an Ethiopian punitive expedition, with plans to despatch two companies of cavalry and mounted rifles to be stationed in the Adongo area and Sudan Defence troops to seal the frontier against Anyuua combatants fleeing from Ethiopia. RAF planes were to be on stand-by to render assistance if necessary. Non-combatant refugees were to be "interned" in the Sudan until the conclusion of the operations. FO 371/16099, Maffey to Lorraine, 18.11.32.

colours of the Ethiopian flag and Ethiopian jurisdiction than in restituting Beir captives. Major Tunncliffe, the district commissioner of Akobo, the centre from where Sudan government influence radiated, was alarmed. A conference of the neighbouring kuaari was convened and both sides presented their cases. At stake was the allegiance of Anyuaa who had their cultivations on the Ethiopian side of the boundary but over whom the Sudan government had customarily exercised de facto jurisdiction. Majid challenged this and offered the kuaari two options: moving permanently to the Sudanese side or staying where their cultivations were and acknowledging Ethiopian authority. They unanimously opted for the latter; they explained their customary payment of tribute to the Sudan government as a matter of ignorance rather than of choice. Incensed by their "ingratitude", Tunncliffe is said to have taken back the cloths he had given them earlier; Majid promptly replaced them. As testimony to his dramatic coup, he returned with two of the kuaari to Gore. One died of pneumonia. The other, a lad of eighteen who was the formal leader of the raids on the Beir, was baptized by "the God of the Amhara", as he described Abuna Mikael, the bishop of Gore.¹

It was in a second and more extensive scouring of the Anyuaa country that Majid was able to accomplish his mission of the restitution of the captives. The preparations for it were more thorough and marked with the pageantry which never seemed

1. Majid, pp. 27-29.

to desert Majid's campaigns. He had at his disposal a fairly formidable force, consisting of his own uniformed Bago Zabaña (literally "guards of the lowlands", a special force recruited by Majid from among the Anyuua and Nuer) and, even more significantly, some 300-400 troops trained in Addis Ababa and sent to Gore.¹ His main targets were three villages: Ajwara, Tor, and Nikani. More by stratagem than force - although the village of Tor was burnt down - Majid was able not only to secure the majority of the captives, but also to rob a large stock of cattle that was to be of great help in paying compensation for the Beir killed in the raids. When, in a special ceremony at Adongo, Majid handed over the captives and paid a large part of the compensation, not more than seven captives remained still unaccounted for.² It was agreed that the cattle that were still owing to the Beir as compensation for their dead kin - estimated at 288 by one source³ - should be paid at Gore.⁴ The deadline for the payment was later extended from 1st May 1933 to 1st June 1934, which gave the Ethiopian authorities enough time to settle their debt.⁵

Majid's tour was also significant because it highlighted one of the major problems of relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan - the trans-frontier grazing of the Gaajak Nuer.

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1. Ibid., p.30; O.I. (Ya-Mato Alaga (Lt.) Wadajo, who was a member of the special troops sent from Addis Ababa)
 2. Ibid., pp. 35-38; FO 371/16991, Maffey to Campbell, 27.4.33; The Times, 23.8.33.
 3. SMR 51, Mar-Apr 1933.
 4. Ibid., Majid, p.38.
 5. FO 371/16992, MacMichael to Campbell, 4.10.33; SMR 69, Sept-Oct 1934.

The problem had its origin in a boundary which completely ignored the ecological needs of a people. Most of the Gaajak were cut off from their traditional dry season grazing ground between the Pibor and the Baro. Their attempts to use those grounds inevitably brought them into conflict with the Anyuua and the Ethiopian authorities.¹ It was attempted to resolve this problem at the Gambella Conference in June 1932 - without much success. What the British consul in Gore apparently wanted was a regularization of the grazing fees occasionally collected from the Gaajak by the Ethiopian authorities, in the pattern of the treaties concluded on Ethiopia's southern frontier with Kenya and its eastern frontier with British Somaliland.² But the governor-general of the Sudan found the idea of dual taxation of the Gaajak Nuer repugnant and rather pinned his hopes on a "rectification" of the boundary which would put the whole of the Baro Salient under Sudan government administration - the undying dream of Sudan government officials.³ All the same, he presumably authorized the governor of Upper Nile Province to negotiate with Ras Mulugeta for an extension of Sudan government administrative rights over Nuer temporarily

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1. SIR 233, Dec 1913; SMIR 328, Nov 1921; SMIR 332, Mar 1922.
 2. FO 371/16098, Erskine report in Barton to Simon, 18.7.32.
 3. FO 371/16992, minutes of a meeting at the Foreign Office attended by Maffey, the governor-general of the Sudan, the governor of Kenya, and the British minister in Addis Ababa, 4.11.33.

grazing in Ethiopia in return for payment of a fixed rent.¹

While the formal negotiations were going on at a snail's pace, Majid was effecting a surprise coup on the field. In essence, what happened was a repeat of the incident in the Akobo area a few months earlier.² Majid raised the question of administrative jurisdiction over the Gaajak Nuer grazing in Ethiopian territory. In a dramatic confrontation with the district commissioner of Nasser, Corfield, Majid asserted Ethiopian government authority and challenged the habit of the Sudan government of collecting taxes across the boundary, even if it were from people whose permanent abode was on the Sudanese side. To a gathering of Nuer chiefs headed by Agid Goñ,³ who had received him with impeccable hospitality, he reiterated that the only legitimate and sovereign power over the area between the Pibor and Baro and the people inhabiting it was the Ethiopian government. To their kin coming from across the boundary for seasonal grazing, he assured them their traditional grazing rights, provided they paid fees to the government. According to Majid, the chiefs from the Sudanese side confessed ignorance of Ethiopian jurisdiction over the grazing lands but, once informed of it, begged permission to settle

1. FO 371/16991, Bell (acting GG) to Campbell, 5.6.33.

2. See above, pp.158-9.

3. Sudan government sources refer to a Giet Gong, describing him as one of the chiefs from whom the 1920 "patrol" encountered the most prolonged resistance, SMR 61, Jan-Feb 1934. Both names probably referred to the Mut Dung mentioned above, pp.

there permanently, which Majid was more than ready to grant.¹

There was indeed a brisk struggle for Nuer allegiance between the respective frontier agents of the two governments. Koryum Tut, originally from the Sudanese side but later domiciled near Jikaw in Ethiopia, was given the title of fitawrari by the governor of Sayo, while his subordinate was made a qañazmach.² He later visited Addis Ababa.³ There was a more or less cordial working relationship between Qañazmach Faranj, the frontier representative of Sayo, and the district commissioner of Nasser in settling outstanding cases between Nuer sections living on their respective sides of the boundary. But the tussle between the same district commissioner and Grazmach Dante, Majid's lieutenant, reached the point where they resorted to the one arresting the chiefs who had shown a leaning for the other.⁴ Majid himself, in an audience with the emperor in 1934, spoke in very strong terms against the idea of leasing the Nuer grazing lands in Ethiopia to the Sudan government in return for an annual payment of rent. He argued that the proposal, coming as it did just when the Ethiopian government was extending its authority over its frontier regions, had some ulterior design behind it. He even threatened to resign if such an agreement was concluded.⁵

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1. Majid, pp. 31-34, According to Sudan government sources, (SMR 59, Nov-Dec 1933), the large scale migration of Gaajak Nuer to settle permanently in Ethiopia, which indeed took place, was prompted more by fear of reprisals than by choice.
 2. SMR 50, Feb-Mar 1933.
 3. SMR 71, Nov-Dec 1934.
 4. SMR 53, May-June 1933.
 5. Zerai Bocurezion, trans. & ed., Qañazmach Majid's "The Legal Settlement of Western Ethiopian Boundary"; B.A. dissertation (HSIU, 1971), p.59.

The struggle for Nuer and Anyuua allegiance was not limited to the representatives of the two governments. On the Ethiopian side, the long-standing dispute between Gore and Sayo for control of the Baro valley represents one of the most glaring weaknesses of frontier administration. Earlier, as we have seen, an Ethiopian offensive to subdue the Anyuua foundered on this very rock of Gore-Sayo rivalry.¹ So, when Majid was charged with the somewhat formidable task of implementing the Gambella agreement, what he hoped for and eventually achieved was his recognition as the government's sole representative on both banks of the Baro. In this he had the backing of the British authorities. The British consul in Gore argued that it was essential to have unified control of both banks if one were to beat the knack of the Anyuua and Nuer to play off governors and officials of the two rival provinces. An Anyuua kuaaro who led a raid on the Bunn, for instance, could retreat to the Gore side of the river and escape Sayo justice.² Finally, in 1934, the emperor appointed Majid frontier representative of the Ethiopian government on both banks of the river. But the appointment scarcely had the desired effect. The struggle, sometimes three-cornered (involving officials of Gore, Sayo, and the Gambella customs), continued.³

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1. See above, p. 134. For other manifestations of this dispute, see below, pp. 261-9.
 2. FO 371/16098, Erskine report in Barton to Simon, 18.7.32.
 3. SMR 74, Feb-Mar 1935.

Later, with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, the British consul in Gore also joined the contest, trying to dislodge Majid from Gambella.¹

Majid's campaigns of 1932-34, conducted despite this chronic administrative problem and shortage of funds, represent, even more than those of 1916, a vigorous assertion of Ethiopian government authority on its western frontier. Where Tassamma had set the confines of Ethiopian influence, Majid came in to establish effective presence. If Minilik was the colonialist bargaining peoples and lands on a conference table, Majid was the soldier who did the dirty work of giving life and substance to those claims. Trekking on through the swamps of the Baro basin, with the tricoloured Ethiopian flags and gifts ranging from cakes of tobacco to rolls of calico, he conjures up a picture not so uncommon in other parts of Africa in the late nineteenth century.

Political presence was generally attended by cultural influence. When early in 1935, the Nuer chief Giet Gong, who had already declared his preference for Ethiopian government authority, visited the district commissioner of Nasser dressed in an Ethiopian highlander's dress, he was adding insult to injury.² Further south, the district commissioner of Akobo could not contain his alarm when, in a tour of the Anyuua country in February 1935, he found the Anyuua near the Ajibur river "very 'Amharized', wearing jodhpores [sic] and long sleeved

1. Majid, pp. 49-51.

2. SMR 74, Feb-Mar 1935.

tunics and using Ethiopian expressions."¹

The Sudan government was not a total loser, either. Although the punitive measures it had hoped for were not forthcoming, the Gambella agreement had been carried out almost to the last detail. Simultaneously with the conclusion of this agreement in June 1932, the Ethiopian authorities had admitted responsibility for another Anyuuaa raid on a people on the Sudanese side of the boundary. This was the Pokumu Anyuuaa raid on the Pil Burun of June 1931. After a pincer attack carried out following the death of the Burun, chief, Oshalla, who had concluded a pact of peace and friendship with the Anyuuaa the latter overcame the Burun, killing twelve of them and capturing others, burnt their village and looted about 160 goats and some money.² In an agreement signed at Gambella on 15th June, 1932, the governor of Wallaga accepted full responsibility for the raid and agreed to pay by 1st August 1932 the blood money of 1460 MTD that was demanded.³ Another sum of 300 MTD was paid in compensation for the burnt houses and the stolen goats.⁴ British authorities, both in London and Khartoum, were gratified at the spirit of cooperation that their Ethiopian counterparts were showing.⁵ It was even suggested to drop a rather comprehensive and aggressive frontier policy for the Sudan that was being concocted at the Foreign

1. SMR 75, Mar-Apr 1935.

2. SMR 30, June-July 1931.

3. FO 371/16098, Huddleston to Lorraine, 30.6.32.

4. FO 371/16991, acting GG to acting high commissioner (Cairo), 15.7.33.

5. FO 371/16991, acting GG to Campbell, 17.5.33; Maffey to Campbell, 27.4.33; FO to Barton, 27.5.33.

Office about this time.¹ What clouded British optimism was the not so rosy picture in the Bela Shangul front, where the local elements were presenting an even more artful defiance of government authority. To that section of the frontier we now turn our attention.

1. See below, pp. 220-5.

CHAPTER 3

Frontier Administration: the Northern Sector

One of the lists of incursions from Ethiopia into Sudan territory habitually compiled by the Sudan government records twenty-nine of them between 1907 and 1919.¹ Of these nearly two-thirds originated from the sa'id front of the boundary. Some involved killing; one was an elopement; another was in fact an incursion into Ethiopian territory which ended in the detention of three women and two men found cultivating on the Ethiopian side. Generally, these incursions were attended by kidnapping and enslavement. On one or two occasions, the raiders were themselves slaves of one of the sa'id sheikhs. Unlike the nyie of the Anyuua, the chief sheikhs were rarely directly involved in these raids, preferring to operate through their muqaddam. Bimbashi, muqaddam of Khojali al-Hasan, acquired particular notoriety in the eyes of the Sudan authorities.

The same theme of slave raiding emerges in an earlier list of raids compiled by the commandant at Roseires in 1900.² All the four raids that were reported to have taken place between October 1899 and June 1900 originated from Asosa, the district of Sheikh Khojali al-Hasan. The victims were mostly

1. FO 371/3500.

2. SIR 71, June-July 1900, app. A

the Burun and Berta people, who were to the Watawit rulers of the hills and the Oromo rulers of the plateau what the Beir further south often proved to be to the Anyuua: easy and defenceless victims of the better equipped raiding parties. In August 1901, following yet another raid from the Ethiopian side after Wingate had already written to Minilik about earlier ones,¹ Sheikh Idris Rajab of Dar Funj wrote to the local mamur asking for government assistance to provide for the protection of his people. According to the sheikh, the raiders

"killed and captured from them their wives and children, more than 150 persons, some of whom have escaped and have reported this to me and have asked me to defend them. I consequently have ordered them to return home, assuring them the Government would take effective measures to guard them. I therefore ask you to refer to the high authority to give me permission to defend these people, and to issue to me 100 Remington rifles, with ammunition for this purpose, lest my people go to reside under natives subject to Abyssinia."²

Idris's request was granted and Remington rifles and ammunition were issued to some of the border sheikhs, in view, as Sudan officials put it, of "the frequent raiding on the Sudan-Abyssinian frontier, and the inability of Menelek to control his frontier tribes."³ It did not take very long for the new acquisitions to be put to use. Idris confronted

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1. This presumably refers to Wingate's letter mentioned above, p. 104.
 2. SIR 86, Sept 1901.
 3. SIR 92, Mar 1902.

a raiding party from Khomosha and in the ensuing fight, the latter lost twelve men and six rifles.¹

Beneath such apparently isolated kidnappings, a much more fundamental process was going on in this period, involving the three important sheikhdoms: Asosa, Khomosha, and Bela Shangul proper. Under the combined pressure of Sudan and Ethiopian authority, they fared differently. The house of Tur al-Guri in Bela Shangul lost the traditional ascendancy in the region that it had maintained throughout the Mahdiyya. The tact and cunning of Khojali of Asosa, which eventually can be said to have paid, sharply contrasted with the defiant attitude of the Wad Mahmud family of Khomosha. It was from the latter that the first significant challenge to government authority came.

The Activities of Ibrahim Wad Mahmud

Muhammad Wad Mahmud, the ruler of the district, was still Minilik's prisoner when the activities of his brother, Ibrahim Wad Mahmud, began to cause serious alarm in Sudan government circles. In origin, these activities were slave raids directed against the Burun on the Sudanese side of the boundary. In a raid in August 1901, fifty Burun were killed and a hundred others captured.² Another raid on the people

1. SIR 93, Apr 1902.

2. FO 1/45, Harrington to Sanderson, 24.8.01.

of J. Gumgum and Wadaga in early 1902 claimed the lives of eight Burun.¹ Ibrahim's method of hunting for slaves included smoking the inhabitants with red pepper out of the caves in which they were hiding.² Later, Gwynn's arbitrary inclusion of Jebel Jerok in the Sudan during his demarcation in 1903 gave the issue a new significant dimension, as the hill was a traditional stronghold of the Wad Mahmud family.³ Gwynn justified his action by saying that it would facilitate Sudan government operations against Ibrahim. But it was not easily forgotten - or forgiven - by the Ethiopian authorities, and even less so by the Wad Mahmud family.

The Sudan authorities started their campaign against Ibrahim with a measure which they could hardly have expected to succeed: the governor of Sennar summoned him to report at Roseires by 1st November 1903, adding that no excuses were to be accepted for his failure to appear. On hearing the contents of the letter, Ibrahim declared that he had no intention of going to Roseires and confiscated the arms and ammunition of the two policemen who brought the message to him. He then transferred his base from J. Jerok to J. Suri on the Ethiopian side, which beside commanding the trade route from Dul to Asosa, was a more suitable base for raiding southern Dar Funj and the Burun country. His relatives and Dajach Kumsa, who had replaced Damiss as the supervisor of the sa'id are said to have advised him to stop his activities. Minilik

1. SIR 91, Feb 1902.

2. SIR 120, July 1904.

3. See above, p101f, and FO 1/47, encl. in Cromer to Lansdowne, 27.6.03.

apparently threatened to arrest him. But Ibrahim ignored them all and persisted in his defiance. In a further raid on the Burun of J. Gerauid in early September 1903, he killed five of them and captured many more.¹

The Sudan government then decided on sending an expedition to put an end to his activities. Details of the planned operation, which envisaged Ethiopian cooperation by blocking the rebel's line of retreat, were communicated to Minilik and got his approval.² On 11th February, 1904, a combined force of 700 infantry and cavalry with a Maxim gun and led by Colonel Gorrings surprised Ibrahim at J. Jerok, where he had moved in the meantime. He managed to escape with most of his followers, but his wife and concubines were captured, along with fifteen rifles and thirty-six men with their families. The operation cost the expeditionary force two men killed and five wounded. Sheikh Idris of Dul and three brothers of Ibrahim sought the aman, which was granted on condition that they handed in their rifles and cattle, a provision which was acceptable only to Idris.³

The expected Ethiopian cooperation scarcely materialized. When on 3rd March, Ibrahim was finally captured, it was not through any effort of the Ethiopian authorities but largely the contribution of Sheikh Hamid Hasan of Asosa, who enticed the rebel to his district and delivered him to Lt.

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1. SIR 111 & 112, Oct & Nov 1903; FO 141/378, Cromer to Clerk, 24.10.03.
 2. FO 141/378, Cromer to Clerk, 23.12.03; Clerk to Cromer, 31.12.03.
 3. SIR 115, Feb 1904.

Colonel Smith, Gorrings' second in command. According to Gorrings, Qañazmach Jirata, Kumsa's representative in the district, had specifically instructed the inhabitants of Dul and Goha not to assist the expedition in any way. When Smith went to Goha to meet Jirata, he was not to be found; the attitude of the inhabitants, who admitted that Ibrahim was with them but refused to give him up, was hostile. Jirata tried to dissimulate by writing Smith a friendly letter; Kumsa eschewed even this formal gesture. Damiss, who was also apparently expected to take part in the operations, explained that he did not do so since he did not want to destroy the district because of one person. Instead he had sent letters to the rulers of Bela Shangul and Asosa to arrest Ibrahim.¹

Ibrahim's capture elicited congratulatory messages from both Minilik and the British foreign secretary, an indication of the measure of importance attached to it.² Ibrahim was later tried in Khartoum and hanged. On the Ethiopian side Jirata was punished by nine months' confinement, "during which he nearly died from exposure and insufficient food", for his obstruction to the expedition and other earlier offences. Kumsa was strongly reprimanded.³ The Sudan

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1. SIR 116, Mar 1904; FO 141/386, Cromer to Clerk, 7.3.04; Gorrings to Wingate, 5.3.04; 11.3.04.
 2. FO 141/386, Clerk to Cromer, 15.3.04; Cromer to Wingate, 7.4.04.
 3. FO 141/393, Harrington to Cromer, 18.1.05.

expeditionary force left behind posts at J. Jerok and Keili. But that did not put a stop to the conflicting claims over the hill. It was Kumsa who took up the issue and wrote to the governor of Sennar, Major C.E. Wilson:

"I believe that you have heard that the Jebel Jerok has been given to the Abyssinian Government, by the agreement made between the English and Abyssinian Governments. Therefore as I have received an order from my Government, to take over the Jebel Jerok (that is Fitawrari Mohamed's country) I have sent my representative Grazmach Tilahoon [who presumably was Jirata's successor] to receive the Jebel Jerok from your hand, but if you have not yet received an order from your Government to leave Jebel Jerok, please write to me an answer through Grazmach Tilahoon who will forward your letter to me.¹"

Wilson wrote back to say that J. Jerok belonged to the Sudan, citing Gwynn's demarcation in the presence of Jirata.² At the same time, he wrote to the officer commanding Jerok post advising him to maintain a friendly attitude but to refer all similar requests to the inspector at Roseires.³

In early 1913, Muhammad Wad Mahmud, who by then had been released from detention, revived his family's claim to the hill, as well as to that of J. Shima, near which he had been cultivating. The British authorities protested against him to both Kumsa and the government in Addis Ababa, whither he was eventually summoned.⁴ In his absence, a Sudan patrol seized his crops to an amount corresponding to the arrears in

1. FO 141/393, encl. in Cromer to Harrington, 5.4.05.

2. Ibid.

3. FO 141/393, 2.5.05.

4. SIR 222 & 231, Jan & Oct 1913.

taxes he allegedly owed the Sudan government.¹ A letter from Damiss requesting that Muhammad be compensated for the crops did not get any favourable reply.² Already, after some unheeded protests, Muhammad had acquiesced in Sudan government authority in the area and promised to pay taxes for his cultivation, which he had been permitted to continue with the understanding "that his position is similar to that of any other native cultivating Government land."³ Soon, however, he made another dramatic gesture to impress on the Sudan authorities his claims to Jebel Jerok by raiding the neighbourhood and kidnapping some Sudanese. This provoked the establishment in the area of a detachment of troops, which was removed later when it was felt that he had shown readiness to improve his relations with the Sudan government.⁴

Khojali's Rise to Pre-eminence

According to one version, the circumstances of Ibrahim's capture were believed to have triggered off a significant event in Asosa: the migration of Hamid Hasan, Khojali's wakil in the district, to the Sudan with some 600 followers. Hamid explained his action by saying that the

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1. SIR 234, Jan 1914.
 2. SIR 237, Apr 1914. Thesiger, the British minister, summarily dismissed Muhammad's claims as baseless. FO 371/1879, in Thesiger to Grey, 7.1.14.
 3. SIR 242, Sept 1914.
 4. SIR 247, Feb 1915.

Ethiopian authorities wanted to arrest him for his part in the capture of Ibrahim, a story which appeared credible in the light of their obstruction to the expedition and the stories of their having been bribed by Ibrahim and other slave raiders in the area to adopt such a policy.¹ The Ethiopian authorities adduced other arguments. Hamid was said to owe the government six years' tribute in arrear. He was also accused of burning the village and killing the people of Musa al-Hash, uncle of Khojali.² Apparently, Fitawrari Gulilat and the other officials who met Wilson at Jerok in May 1905 to discuss the issue confessed in an aside that their real reasons for wanting Hamid were his leanings towards the Sudan and their own wish for him to show them the hidden treasures of Khojali.³

Whatever the reasons, the authorities, including Minilik, seemed to attach great importance to the return of Hamid, though not to the extent of risking a dispute with their Sudan counterparts in the process. Even after Wilson and Fitawrari Gulilat had concluded an agreement respecting

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1. See for example FO 141/386, Gorrings to Wingate, 13.3.04.
 2. Wilson disputed this saying that the tribute was paid and that the village was burnt by Jote, not Hamid. FO 141/393, encl. in Wingate to Owen, 23.5.05; also SIR 130, May 1905. Gwynn, while referring to exactions by Kumsa, attests to disputes between Hamid and other notables of Asosa, who accused the former of appropriating tribute due the government and thus provoking the exactions. FO 1/47, report in Cromer to Lansdowne, 27.6.03. Also Bakura Sion, p.21, for internal disputes abetted by arms secretly supplied by the detained sheikhs.
 3. FO 141/393, encl. in Wingate to Owen, 23.5.05.; SIR 130, May 1905.

Hamid's wish to remain in the Sudan,¹ Minilik is reported to have expressed his anxiety for the return of Hamid and to have promised Khojali to meet all his demands if he succeeded in persuading him to that end. No doubt the prospect of other notables of Asosa following Hamid's example, as they threatened to do so, cast a shadow on the humanity and justice of the emperor's rule. As Atieb points out, his letter to them heralding the return of Khojali to his district after many years of captivity was almost entreating: "I delayed Khojele for so long for a small matter. Do not feel sorry for his stay here with me. I will send him hereafter. He will come for you soon."²

Khojali was not in too much hurry to go back. After the three sheikhs were given the liberty to return to their country in 1907, he spent a few more months in Addis Ababa of his own volition.³ Once back in his district, however, his first task was to send a message of reassurance to his dispersed subjects urging them to return to their country. In a uniquely candid admission of guilt, Khojali blamed his own double-dealing for all the destruction of his country and the scattering of his subjects, which he compared with the Jewish diaspora. He went on:

"God punished me for my crime and vanity.
All those who were in my hands deserted me
and submitted to others... Ask for forgiveness

1. Ibid.

2. P.50. 25. May 1908.

3. See Atieb, p.49, for possible reasons.

from God, as I have done; so that he may forgive us, in the same way as he saved the people of Israel in their hour of need. I regretted [what I had done] and turned to God, and he saved me. He delivered me from my suffering so that I should bring you news of the aman and peace. Hence this letter. Whoever has been wronged in the past, you or me, let him forgive. I mean only peace and aman to you; I swear this in the name of the Prophet... Consult with your brothers and sons and come back to your country. Have no fears."¹

The response to this appeal is hard to assess in detail. But even Hamid seems to have been persuaded to return. Khojali threw the sentiments expressed above overboard and promptly handed him to the Ethiopian authorities. The Sudan government protested, claiming that Hamid was "a Sudan subject and head sheikh of a large district".² Khojali wrote back scathingly that Hamid was his slave.³ As promised, in recognition of his services, Minilik returned Beggi to Khojali. The district of Beggi, lying between Asosa and Qellam, Jote's district, had been disputed by the two rulers for long. Kutu, the local ruler, had apparently opted to be under Khojali's supervision (another source says he was

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1. An Amharic translation of this interesting letter, written on 18th Jumada al-Ukhra¹³²⁵/29th July 1907 and directed mainly to the notables of Asosa who had sought refuge in Bela Shangul proper after the clashes that took place while Khojali was in captivity, is quoted in full in Bakura Sion, pp. 21-22. See Arkell Papers, p.6, for a similar but not so successful effort by Tur al-Guri to call back those of his people who had fled to the Sudan in his absence.
 2. SIR 166, May 1908.
 3. SIR 170, Sept 1908.

completely independent) until Khojali was imprisoned at the turn of the century. Dajach Kumsa, who succeeded Dajach Damiss in overall supervision of the region, gave Jote the green light to incorporate Beggi in 1903, although Minilik had appointed a certain Basha Zawde over the district as an interim measure in 1900. This Jote did with bloody efficiency, killing Kutu and wiping out most of the inhabitants of the district; some of the survivors fled to Asosa.¹

Minilik also sent Khojali 1000 head of cattle and 10,000 dollars to help him in developing the district, adding that he should resettle the returning refugees there.² A counter-move on the part of Jote was foiled in a battle at Wabara, where Khojali defeated and captured Ashana Tullu, Jote's brother. Khojali followed up his victory with skilful propaganda which persuaded many Oromo to flee from "the tyranny of Jote" and settle in Beggi, acknowledging Khojali's authority. Jote was isolated, deserted even by his sons, Mardasa and Yohannes, who were also said to have settled in Beggi, if only temporarily. Khojali also gave financial encouragement to the district of Anfillo to the south to rebel against Jote; the bloody manner in which Jote suppressed the revolt eventually proved his undoing.³

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1. FO 1/47, Gwynn report in Cromer to Lansdowne, 27.6.03; SIR 188, Mar 1910, app. Amharic letter of Sahla Madhin to Khojali, 26.5.28, in Atieb. Cf. Fo 1/44, encl. in Wingate to FO, 2.9.00.
 2. Copy of letter in Atieb, app.
 3. Ibid., pp. 52-53; also Bahru, pp. 47-48.

Khojali next turned his attention in the direction of Bela Shangul proper. The death in January 1910 of Tur al-Guri, its veteran ruler, could only have goaded Khojali on in his bid for supremacy. After a succession controversy which split Bela Shangul society in two - the Watawit supporting Tur al-Guri's brother, Muhammad Khojali, and the Berta lining behind Tur al-Guri's son, Muhammad Tur al-Guri the latter party, which had in its ranks such redoubtable warriors as Angerri and Ibrahim, prevailed.¹ But the son clearly did not have the stature of his father. Khojali got additional encouragement for his expansionist drive from Minilik, who gave it his tacit blessing in return for the liberal tribute in gold and slaves which Khojali was scarcely tardy in supplying. In 1912, Muhammad Tur al-Guri had to comply with Khojali's demand for payment of 50 slaves, 100 head of cattle, and 15 rifles. This was in apparent retaliation for Tur al-Guri's attack on Abd al-Hai of Beshir for transferring his allegiance to Khojali at the turn of the century.² What was tacitly condoned by Minilik later obtained Iyasu's formal recognition. In December 1914, Iyasu authorized Khojali to take control of Bela Shangul proper and Khomosha.³ Accordingly, on his way back from Addis Ababa, Khojali summoned Muhammad Tur al-Guri to Mandi.

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1. SIR 188 & 189, Mar & Apr 1910: Arkell Papers, p.6. See above, pp. 84-85 for Angerri, and below, pp. 181, 195, for Ibrahim.
 2. Arkell Papers, pp. 5,7.
 3. Atieb, pp. 53-56.

He then proceeded to imprison him along with his other followers and to confiscate their rifles. Muhammad's troops, meanwhile waiting at a distance, attacked but were ambushed by Khojali and lost many men.¹

Of the other rulers, Sheikh Nazir of Beshir, complied with Khojali's orders and reported at Mandi. Muhammad Wad Mahmud began writing unusually friendly letters to the mamur at Kurmuk in an effort to atone for his past record of hostility and ensure a refuge in case of a forceful drive from Khojali.² Ibrahim, Tur al-Guri's Berta commander managed to escape from the battle of Mandi, positioned himself near the boundary in readiness to fight or, if Khojali's force proved too overwhelming, to flee. A minor incident on 7th August in fact claimed the lives of four of Khojali's men.³ On 20th August, Khojali and the Ethiopian government representative, Qañazmach Haylu, wrote letters to the Sudan authorities including the governor general, recounting the crimes allegedly committed by Muhammad Tur al-Guri in the past and communicating the imperial order placing Bela Shangul under Khojali's rule. Both Khojali and Haylu ended their letters with requests that all followers of Muhammad seeking refuge in the Sudan be sent back.⁴

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1. According to information from the "Omda of the Buruns" in SIR 250, May 1915. An earlier report, which has some inconsistencies, puts Muhammad's loss at 200 killed and Khojali's at a total of 531 killed and wounded. SIR 249, Apr, 1915.
 2. SIR 249 & 250, Apr & May 1915.
 3. SIR 251 & 254, June & Sept 1915.
 4. DUR 122/6, ADI to GG, 16.9.15; SIR 254, Sept 1915.

While acknowledging Khojali's power and the central government backing that he enjoyed, the Sudan government was more than reluctant to accede to these requests. To begin with, to do so would have been contrary to its declared policy of not returning any refugees unless they were proven criminals. Far more significantly, it saw in Khojali's drive for supremacy in the region the spectre of German subversion. Doughty-Wylie, the British chargé d'affaires in Addis Ababa, had no doubts about the connection. "I am practically sure," he had written to Grey, the British foreign secretary, "that emissaries of Mazhar [the Turkish consul-general in Harar] and the Germans are in relation with Abyssinian Moslem chiefs nearer to our frontier, such as KHOJALI, and the propaganda is designed to spread to these regions and further."¹ He had also assured Wingate that "German Agents visit KHOJALI very often and his country should be watched."² Wingate was merely echoing this apprehension when he summarily dismissed the struggle for supremacy in the sa'id as "the usual German method of trying to stir up troubles on the frontier in the hope that they may get us involved with the Abyssinians."³

Such a state of sensitivity is to some extent understandable in view of the rising influence of the Germans in Ethiopia at the time and the known pro-German leanings of

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1. DUR 122/6, 24.10.14.
 2. DUR 122/6, 7.11.14.
 3. DUR 469/11, letter to Clayton, 5.10.15. See also DUR 122/6, Symes to Cameron, 18.9.15.

Iyasu himself. The young ruler counted on the victory of Turkey and Germany in the war to extend his domain at the expense of the Allied powers who had colonies adjacent to Ethiopia. The German consul in Addis Ababa, Holz, was much favoured in court. German successes at the front were feted at the legation in the presence of ministers and members of the nobility. Leaflets and maps showing the areas of German victories were distributed to the public outside.¹ In 1914, a mission headed by Leo Frobenius and entrusted with message of a "confidential" nature was intercepted by the Italians at Massawa. Nonetheless, in 1916, Iyasu is said to have agreed to enter the war on the side of Germany and Turkey and attack the Sudan.²

The German menace, real or imagined, made the British completely oblivious to the dynamics of the internal politics of the sa'id. It formed the background for the moves to send officers to Kurmuk "to watch developments" and to reinforce the garrison at Roseires.³ With regard to the refugees, Wingate wrote to Qañazmach Haylu on 29th September, expressing his constant anxiety for peace on the frontier and regretting the conduct of Muhammad Tur al-Guri. He reiterated what he called the Sudan government policy of opposition to "all acts of disobedience or revolt against the

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1. Mars'e Hazan, Iyasu, pp. 22-23; cf. Marcus, Life and Times, pp. 266, 270.
 2. Heinrich Loth, "Ambitions in Ethiopia: Interference by German Imperialism in the internal affairs of Ethiopia, 1889-1939," African Studies-Afrika-Studien, ed. Thea Büttner & Gerhard Brehme (Berlin, 1973), pp. 27-28.
 3. DUR 122/6, Symes to Cameron, 18.9.15; priv sec to ADI, 16.9.15.

Sovereign authority in Abyssinia." While promising to disarm all rebels crossing the boundary in the Sudan, he dodged the issue of extradition as "the subject of an arrangement between our Governments to be decided in the interests of all parties and the tranquility of the frontier."¹

Thus, despite his clear superiority in arms and organization,² Khojali's bid for supremacy failed, at any rate for the time being. He was apparently regarded with universal distaste by the Watawit outside Asosa, some even describing him as an upstart and preferring direct Shawan occupation to his rule.³ To make matters worse for Khojali, the government in Addis Ababa, possibly in response to requests from the British to counsel moderation, summoned him to the capital. Khojali ignored the summons, wishing to confront his superiors with a fait accompli. He persisted in his drawn-out confrontation with Muhammad Tur al-Guri's followers. There were two clashes in June and July 1916, neither of them conclusive.⁴ Meanwhile, the summons

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1. DUR 122/6, Wingate to Haylu, 29.9.15.
 2. He was reputed to possess nearly 2000 rifles, compared to a potential force of only 700 soldiers that could be raised by Muhammad Tur al-Guri. SIR 250 & 256, May & Nov 1915. In 1911, a Sudan government officer described "his band and mounted troops [as] having far more discipline and drill than the Abyssinian troops. His mules are the finest to be seen anywhere; his musical instruments came from Ras Makonnen, and are probably a relic of a Beni Shangul regiment, trained by a French officer." SIR 204, July 1911, app.B.
 3. SIR 256, Nov 1915; DUR 122/6, Wingate to Thesiger, 16.9.15.
 4. SIR 250, Nov 1915; SIR 263 & 264, June & July 1916.

from the capital continued: Khojali evaded them all, feigning illness or claiming that his presence was unnecessary as his son was already there. Nervous about his own position, he is even said to have hinted at the possibility of his migrating to the Sudan.¹ In May 1917, Kumsa, Khojali's immediate superior, wrote him a letter couched in deceptively benign sentimentalism, gently reminding him of the summons and assuring him that, in frequently asking for him, Ras Tafari, who had then become heir apparent after the deposition of Iyasu in September 1916, was solely moved by consideration of the love that his father, Ras Makonnin, had for Khojali.² In September 1917, Khojali arrived in the capital. His characteristically lavish presents bought him peace with Tafari but apparently did not prevent the temporary transfer of his district to Qañazmach Haylu's jurisdiction.³

The only positive response to Khojali came, as noted above, from Sheikh Nazir Ali of Hillet Beshir, who, according to the former, received a letter from "the Prince of Abyssinia [i.e. Iyasu] thanking him for his ready compliance with the Royal Order directing him to be under Sheikh Khojali."⁴ Even he is believed to have been persuaded by Muhammad Wad Mahmud, whom Khojali resentfully called "a thorn in the side

1. SIR 270, Jan 1917.

2. Copy in Atieb, app.

3. SIR 281, Dec 1917; SIR 282, Jan 1918.

4. CRO Intel 1/16/75, Sudan-Abyssinia frontier report, Sept 1916.

of both Governments", to reverse his decision.¹ It was, however, only a matter of time before Khojali fulfilled his ambition. A series of events in the early 20's created the circumstances under which Khojali sought - and achieved - the supremacy that had eluded him before. The first of these was the flight of the people of Beshir to the Sudan after a clash between their ruler and Muhammad Wad Mahmud. The incident brought into sharp focus the triangular rivalries of Khomosha, Asosa and Bela Shangul proper over the village. In the centre of it all was the mamur of Kurmuk who suddenly found himself an arbiter of the conflicting claims - an interesting commentary on the authority of the Ethiopian government in this region.

It was not for the first time that Beshir came to assume crucial importance in the trilateral relations of the sheikhdoms. In 1891, Khojali, Muhammad Wad Mahmud, and Tur al-Guri formed an alliance against Muhammad Ahmad al-Khannagi of Beldidino, who had facilitated the Mahdist attack on Bela Shangul in 1889. After their victory over Beldidino, they agreed to attack the people of Beshir for submitting to the Mahdists. But Tur al-Guri was bought out of the scheme by a present of gold from Beshir. The refusal of his two allies to share the bribe killed the alliance. From then on, Beshir continued in a tributary status to Bela Shangul. The transfer of his allegiance to Khojali al-Hasan by Abd al-Hai

1. SIR 261, Apr 1916, report on a meeting between Khojali and Capt. Dumbell of the Slavery Dept; SIR 264, July 1916.

provoked an attack by Tur al-Guri in 1898. Damiss too sanctioned Tur al-Guri's overlordship. In 1909, after his return from detention, Tur al-Guri dismissed Gellab, the then ruler of Beshir, on the ground that he had paid no tribute in his absence. He appointed Nazir in his place. Gellab went to Belwara, which grew ultimately into a veritable colony of refugees from Beshir. Around 1913, Nazir Ali used the abduction of a Beshir boy by Tur al-Guri's men as a pretext to renounce his allegiance to him and to associate his destiny with the rising fortunes of Khojali al-Hasan.¹

In January 1915, in a remarkable appreciation of the problem posed by refugees to the Sudan, Iyasu had advised Khojali to conduct his campaigns with tact and moderation. With reference to the people of Beshir, he said:

"lure them up, because if you attack them, they might fly to the British territory and cause us greater problem. If attempts to bring them in fail, inform the British about their belligerence, and take assurance from them that they won't entertain belligerents in case they flee to their territory; after which you may attack them.... Attack them with such techniques that they won't seek refuge in the British territory."²

It was this problem of refugees which Iyasu had anticipated that was to be highlighted in the early 20's. The man chiefly responsible for the state of affairs was not Khojali, but Muhammad Wad Mahmud.

1. Arkell Papers, pp. 4, 5, 7, 8: SIR 202, May 1911; SIR 250, May 1915, app. A.

2. Atieb, p.59.

In April 1920, Muhammad raided two villages in the Sudan, causing damage estimated at over six thousand Egyptian pounds. This was allegedly in retaliation for an earlier raid on his own folks from that direction. The Sudan government's reaction to the incident was somewhat different from the usual flurry of protests. One report, while singling out Muhammad as the chief culprit disturbing the tranquility of the frontier, went some way towards appreciating the root of the problem by pointing out that "he believes himself to be lord and master of Jebel Jerok and Kurmuk which were forcibly taken by the Government from his brother Ibrahim".¹ Muhammad, however, expected a retaliatory attack from the Sudan. His efforts to forge an alliance with Ibrahim of Bela Shangul was presumably prompted by this consideration as well as that of creating a united front against Khojali. In any case, the alliance was short-lived. It could not stand the test of Muhammad's hostilities with the people of Beshir and the rival claims of the two partners over them.

The hostilities started when men of Khojali Nurein, wakil of Nazir, attacked Dul on 4th May 1920 in pursuit of transgressors who had beaten one of their folk. What is striking about the incident is the speed and simultaneity with which both Khojali Nurein and Muhammad informed the mamur of Kurmuk about it. The number of people killed was three according to Muhammad, five according to Khojali. The raid was also inevitably attended by burning and looting.

1. CRO Intel 2/23/186, 30.4.20. The reference to Kurmuk was probably by mistake as there is no indication that the Wad Mahmud family ever had a claim on it.

Surprisingly enough, Muhammad concluded his letter with just the customary ending: "For your information"; Khojali Nurein warned of more to come: "Tomorrow, if God will, we shall go after them and shall not stop until God decides what is to be done."¹ But it was Muhammad who attacked a day or two later. He burnt the village of Beshir, causing some eighty of its inhabitants to seek refuge across the boundary. Five of his men and nine from Beshir were killed. He was so elated with his success that he was reported to have declared his intention of attacking Kurmuk itself. An alleged threat to Khojali Nurein from Ibrahim that he would attack unless the former submitted to Muhammad could not have failed to boost his morale. Temporarily at any rate, for a few days later, the Bela Shangul rulers wrote to the mamur informing him that Sheikh Nasser Muhammad had been appointed over the people of Beshir in place of Nazir, then in Beggi with his patron, Khojali al-Hasan. The people of Beshir reportedly welcomed the new appointment and wrote to Bela Shangul asking for support against Muhammad.²

Meanwhile, Muhammad was asserting his own authority over Beshir. In a letter to the mamur that had all the appearance of an inter-governmental communication, he asked for the return of the refugees. He recounted "the trespass of the natives of Beshir", pointing in particular to their latest outrage when they attacked Dul and killed, among others,

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1. Translations of both letters, written on 15 Shaban 1338/ 5th May 1920, are enclosed in CRO Intel 2/23/186, mamur to govr Sennar, 5.5.20.
 2. CRO Intel 2/23/186, Knox to govr. Sennar, 8.5.20; mamur to govr, 9.5.20, 11.5.20.

"El Fik[i] Mohammad Ahmed Hag Mohammad, a well known man, and a man named El Sherif Ibn Khalid, cousin of the afore-said." Finally, his patience was exhausted and

"they were attacked and were defeated and their strength was scattered, and now they have got no place to reside except in the Government [i.e. Sudan] land. We therefore beg you to kindly order them to return with their cattle in case they are found in Government territory. As they are offenders they should be returned to the place in which they committed the offence as this is the way of all the Governments."¹

Muhammad repeated this argument of extradition in a subsequent letter, adding that "Our Governments are on good terms, and we hope you will comply with our request."²

Muhammad Tur al-Guri, ruler of Bela Shangul, for his part reasserted his ancestral claims over the people of Beshir, introducing at the same time a new argument of tax arrears that the refugees had to pay. He added that he had sent his brother Ibrahim to "tranquilize" them. Khojali Nurein was rather apprehensive of Ibrahim's mission and expressed a desire to settle in the Sudan with his family.³

Muhammad Wad Mahmud picked up the same argument of tribute and continued pressing for the return of the refugees who had "done bad by killing some of our men, cost us ammunitions and refused to pay the GIBIR of their King for 7 years." In

1. CRO Intel 2/23/186, 20th Shaban 1338/9th May 1920.

2. CRO Intel 2/23/186, encl. in mamur to govr., 18.5.20.

3. CRO Intel 2/23/186, encl. in mamur to govr., 18.5.20.

exchange, he promised "to return you anything even a hen that comes to us."¹ Two days later, he wrote another letter challenging the claim of the Bela Shangul rulers over the people of Beshir, as their lawful ruler was with Khojali - a fact which Ibrahim himself admitted when he said that "They left us without any reason and lived under Khogali El Hassan for 6 years."² In an even more interesting vein, Muhammad continued:

"In the contract of the seven great powers it is agreed that anyone who raids another should be punished by the so called powers and his arms etc are given as compensation with a fine for the damage of persons etc to the people raided. I should therefore beg that the Government may kindly return to me all arms and properties of Beshir's people and also to live [sic] a fine on them for the persons they killed."³

In the growing contest for the mamur's attention and consideration, Ibrahim sent his son, Musa, with a present of a leopard skin. On his way, Musa visited the people of Beshir, according to Ibrahim "merely to sympathise them" for what had happened, as they were relatives and friends.⁴ To match Muhammad's grandiloquence, he wrote

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1. CRO Intel 2/23/186, Muhammad to mamur, 27th Shaban 1338/16th May 1920.
 2. CRO Intel 2/23/186, Ibrahim to govr. Sennar, 13th Ramadhan 1338/31st May 1920.
 3. CRO Intel 2/23/186, Muhammad to mamur, 29th Shaban 1338/18th May 1920. A postscript, which is not clear whether it is Muhammad's or the translator's, adds that the war indemnity referred to the Italian payment to Ethiopia after the battle of Adwa.
 4. CRO Intel 2/23/186, Ibrahim to mamur, recd. 22.5.20, and 9th Ramadhan 1338/27th May 1920.

another letter to the governor of Sennar investing himself with the honorific title of "Amin Al-Hudud Al Habashat" [sic] and blaming Muhammad as the source of all the troubles. He then reminded the governor of his earlier request to return the refugees with their effects.¹ Muhammad now changed his tune from making a similar request to a policy of entrusting the refugees to the care of the Sudan government. He reiterated his allegation that the Bela Shangul rulers had forfeited all claims to Beshir seven years before when Khojali al-Hasan took over, and added:

"Prior to our fighting with Beshir, Ibrahim could not look to Beshir from a distance of about three hours even if given 1000 wagias of gold but when he came to Beshir and found [they] became so weak, he wrote to you. Now I say you deserve them for yourselves and have better not to return to them anything as you are the Govt."²

Finally came Khojali al-Hasan's views on the situation. He denounced "the transgression of Mohammed Mahmoud upon our folk & subjects", the news of which "has reached throughout the width & breadth of the world". Muhammad must have been diabolically inspired to raid "the folk of Beshir who were [sic] professed Islam since the olden times and do nothing save religious worship of God the Almighty." But what Khojali eventually recommended was no different from what Muhammad himself had come to accept:

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1. CRO Intel 2/23/186, 13th Ramadhan 1338/31st May 1920.
 2. CRO Intel 2/23/186, Muhammad to mamur, recd. 30.5.20.

"I strongly bequeath them [i.e. the refugees] to you & beg that they may be treated well though I am aware that no harm could reach them so long as they have immigrated to a just Government I strongly bequeath them to you to treat them well."¹

Only the Bela Shangul rulers persisted in their unfaltering demand for the return of the refugees. As late as October 1921, Muhammad Tur al-Guri wrote to the governor of Funj - as Sennar province was renamed in that year - expressing his confidence in Sudan government justice, reminding him of the Beshir refugees as well as others from Bela Shangul, and requesting him "to treat me with your known justice with regard to these people."² The Sudan government reply, which was intended to be a model for all other similar requests, was characteristic. While conceding the request for the return of arms that might have been taken along by the refugees, there was to be no forcible repatriation of refugees unless they were proven to be criminals or deserters. Instead, they were to be given the liberty to settle in an area of at least six days' distance from the boundary.³

In the meantime, Khojali was preparing himself for

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1. CRO Intel 2/23/186, 9th Ramadhan 1338/27th May 1920.
 2. CRO Intel 2/22/177, encl. in acting govr. to DI, 15.10.21.
 3. CRO Intel 2/22/177, encl. in DI to govr. Funj, 14.12.21. Earlier, the dir. of Intelligence had written to the priv sec in a similar vein, describing the refugees as political ones. CRO Intel 2/23/186, 26.6.20.

a final reckoning with the defiant Muhammad Wad Mahmud, who was charged not only with the Beshir raids but also with obstructing a concessionaire who had obtained permission from the central government to prospect in Dul.¹ Khojali obtained authorization from Addis Ababa to capture Muhammad dead or alive. He accordingly summoned him to Goha. Muhammad refused and, in anticipation of an attack, transferred his property and family to the Bela Shangul border. Khojali was to be assisted by a representative of the Ethiopian government, Nagadras Deressa Tola, who was presumably responsible for the rumour widely circulating at the time that, because of its distance and the ethnic affinities of the people to the Sudanese, the Ethiopian government was considering handing over the sa'id to the Sudan.² Muhammad's tone shifted from protestations of his "love" for the Sudan government when he felt the attack from Khojali was imminent to his characteristic defiance when the pressures was off. It was the more defiant posture that one readily associates with his family that he displayed in the final days of his political life. He put Deressa and Khojali's representative in chains for a week when they arrived at his headquarters.³ He spurned summons from Khojali and Dajach Yigazu, who had

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1. The latter point is discussed in greater detail below, Pp. 423-6.
 2. CRO Intel 2/23/186, mamur to inspector Kurmuk, 21.6.20; mamur to govr., 29.6.20; acting govr. to ADI, 21.7.20.
 3. CRO Intel 2/23/186, mamur to inspector Kurmuk, 21.6.20; inspector Kurmuk to govr. 9.7.20, 17.7.20.

briefly succeeded Birru as governor of Sayo, and challenged them to battle. In March 1922, a battle did take place and Muhammad was defeated and captured. Unchallenged, Khojali extended his authority to Khomosha.¹

Khojali's authority further got tacit recognition from the Sudan government when it collected one year's tribute on his behalf from the refugees from Khomosha as well as the earlier Beshir refugees, in lieu of their repatriation. Khojali apparently had not given up the Beshir refugees after all. In fact he devised a crafty formula to circumvent Sudan government extradition policy: he claimed ten times the value of some honey he had given the refugees before the flight. Those who could not pay the onerous debt were forced to return.²

After Khomosha, Khojali turned his attention to Bela Shangul. The use of the district by Muhammad Wad Mahmud's followers as a base from which they engaged in slaving activities provided the excuse, if any were needed. Muhammad Tur al-Guri was either powerless or unwilling to comply with Khojali's request to restrain them. He persuaded Dajach Birru, the re-instated governor of Sayo, to send for the Bela Shangul ruler; the latter was arrested on arrival. Ibrahim, his muqaddam, preferred to fight. But he was soon captured and put under the custody of Mahdi

1. Bakura Sion, p. 22; CRO Intel 1/15/72, mamur Kurmuk to govr. 1.9.21; FO 371/7148, Russell to FO, 22.3.22.

2. Arkell Papers, p.10.

Khojali.¹ Thus, by the end of 1923, Khojali seems to have achieved the position of preeminence in the whole Bela Shangul region that he had so assiduously pursued throughout his political career.

To the south, too, Khojali's power and influence was growing. Already he had secured control of Beggi.² The next area of contention between him and the Jote family was Wabara, which had apparently been given to Jote when Beggi was placed under Khojali. Khojali tried various means to annex Wabara, from inciting an uprising against the Oromo rulers to blackmailing Mardasa Jote, who was in control of Gidami, Jote's capital, after his father's death in 1918, over his alleged lease of a tract of territory to the Sudan. The blackmail seemed to have born fruit when Mardasa formally ceded Wabara to Khojali in January 1923.³ Mardasa reasserted his claim over Wabara a year later. As an interim measure, it remained under government custody until Khojali's claim was confirmed by an order from the Ministry of the Pen in May 1928. In October 1930, Nagadras Warqe was sent from the capital to delimit the boundary of the district.⁴ Jote's sons, outmanoeuvred by the political

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1. Ibid., pp. 10-11. A slightly different version is found in SIR 354, Jan 1924, "Statement from a Native recently in Kurmuk," Cf. SIR 351, Oct 1923; CRO Intel 1/5/25, Skrine to DI, 27.8.25. Bakura Sion (p.22) says Muhammad himself gave in only after a fight.
 2. See above, pp. 178-9.
 3. Atieb, p.61. Atieb reproduces a statement dated 27th Jan 1923 and signed by and bearing the seal of Masfin Jote (as Mardasa was also known) surrendering Wabara to Khojali "in the name of Minilik, Tafari and Zawditu". O.I. Kasahun confirms the allegation that Mardasa leased a piece of land to the British.
 4. Amharic letters in Atieb: Sahla Madhin to Khojali, 26.5.28; Warqe to Khojali, 13.10.30.

guile of the old sheikh, were smarting from the humiliation when the Italian invasion in 1936 presented them with an opportunity to retaliate by defeating him in the battle of Shonge.

The Jote Family and the Sudan

We may at this point look more closely into the association of the Jote family with the Sudan. Whatever the authenticity of Khojali's claim that Mardasa leased a tract of land to the Sudan, there is no doubt that the family had a rather special relationship with the Sudan government. In 1908, Jote was imprisoned for, among other things, alleged links with the Sudan.¹ This is as difficult to substantiate as his reported submission to the Ansar in the previous century. What is beyond dispute is the fact that his son Mardasa turned in that direction in his quest for someone to intercede on his father's behalf. In early 1909, Mardasa and Ammaya, Jote's brother, went to Khartoum to ask for Wingate's intervention. Wingate was unenthusiastic but wrote to the British minister and the Coptic archbishop, Abuna Mattewos, to make gentle pleas. Whether the archbishop exerted any efforts to that effect is not known. The minister cautiously tried to exonerate Jote from the alleged offences but was very doubtful of the successful

1. Bahru, p.48. The allegation seems to have been based entirely on a forged letter by his daughter Baritu, widow of the ruler of Anfillo, an area that had lately been subjected to a ravaging campaign by Jote. SIR 264, July 1916; SIR 204, July 1911, app. B; cf. GFM 14/13, Zintgraff to Bülow, 28.7.08.

outcome of his interview in the light of the government's extreme suspicion of the rulers near the Sudanese boundary and in particular "the leanings of the Dejaz and his family towards Sudan rule". At any rate the pleas did not secure the release of Jote and Solomon, who had also been detained along with his father. But that they managed to escape with their lives was ascribed to British influence. As for Mardasa and Ammaya, they heard while in Khartoum that their property had been confiscated, their houses turned into barracks for the occupying Amhara soldiers, and some of their relatives imprisoned - a state of affairs which made them extremely reluctant to return.¹

Eventually, however, they did return. But their sojourn in the Sudan was to leave an indelible impression on their minds, particularly that of Mardasa, who was at the time a youth of 18.² He learned some Arabic and began to sign in English as well as Amharic. It is indeed interesting that a 1925 Amharic document containing the signatures and seals of persons mostly related to Jote has English and Arabic versions for some of them in addition to the Amharic ones.³ In an interview with a Sudan government officer in Gidami in 1911, Mardasa surprised him by his outspoken denunciation of Amhara oppression, spoke of an impending

1. SIR 179, June 1909; FO 141/422, Harvey to Grey, 19.8.09; SIR 203, June 1911, app.; DUR 100/8/4, Wingate to Mattewos, 12.5.09.

2. SIR 203, June 1911, app.

3. Atieb, app.

general Oromo uprising in western Ethiopia, and "made no secret of the wish of himself and his people to come under Sudan rule." Fitawrari Ammaya, though less flamboyant, was scarcely less explicit in declaring his intentions. He told the Galla chiefs had formed the hope, based partly on the officer, Capt, H. H. Kelly, "that/the general friendly attitude of the Sudan Government, and perhaps partly on my having entered the country by a route new to Europeans, that my coming was preliminary to British influence in the affairs of the province." Ammaya requested that Oromo who want to cultivate near Khor Jikaw on the Sudanese side be permitted to do so, and wished to make arrangements for three of his sons to study at Gordon College. Kelly was so encouraged by the friendly attitude of both Mardasa and Ammaya that he tipped Jote's province and that of Kumsa of Naqamte as convenient supply centres in "the event of military operations ever becoming necessary in south-west Abyssinia".¹

A month later, another officer, Capt. Newcombe, got a similar reception while passing through Gidami. After asking him "many intelligent questions about the Sudan, and as to when the railway would reach Darfur, and what was the government of that country", Mardasa expressed his admiration for Sudan administration.

"He remarked that God did two things which he could not understand: he made Abyssinia a good country with a bad government, and the Sudan a bad country with a good government,

1. SIR 203, June 1911, app.

and compared methods of taxation. In Abyssinia money was collected and kept by the high officials; in the Sudan, even if people were taxed heavily, the money always went back to them owing to the fine buildings, railways, &c. which employed so much labour with good result."¹

His greatest wish was to relinquish his official position as soon as his elder brother, Solomon, was released from prison and to go and study at Gordon College.² It did not take long for Solomon to regain his freedom, but Mardasa's dream remained unrealized. In contrast to his brother, however, he continued to display a distinctly favourable attitude to British interests, particularly in Gambella, and often expressed his anxiety to remain friends with the Sudan.³

All this was not to the liking of the authorities in Addis Ababa. Mardasa was imprisoned for over a year after his return from Khartoum.⁴ A few years later, partly through the instigation of his rival brothers Oda and Wasana, who probably coveted his governorship of the rich Sayo district, Mardasa was summoned to Addis Ababa and charged with "partiality to the English"; some forged letters were even produced.⁵ Although, in the prevailing international situation, his alleged partiality to the English might have

1. SIR 204, July 1911, app.B

2. Ibid.

3. SIR 238 & 239, May & June 1914.

4. SIR 204, July 1911, app. B

5. SIR 264, July 1916; Bahru, p.50.

been unpleasant to the pro-German Iyasu, there is no record of any strong measure being taken against Mardasa. Iyasu, after all, was his brother-in-law, having married Askala Jote in 1912. Both Mardasa and Wasana are also reported to have accompanied Iyasu in his flight to the Afar country after his deposition in September 1916.¹ This association with Iyasu made his successors view the Jote family, more particularly Mardasa, with a great deal of suspicion. With the additional machinations of Khojali described above, Mardasa ultimately ended up in jail for a second time.

There were, however, less savoury aspects of the relationship between Jote's family and the Sudan, like the major raid on Jebel Bogaia in 1907 described by Sudan authorities as "probably the most serious and brutal raid since that of Ibrahim wad Mahmud."² The raid, originating from Jote's country, apparently had his blessing. Thirteen Burun lost their lives.³ In February 1923, another major incursion into the Sudan again had its origin in Qellam. The target was a place called Warragara (near Khor Daga) and the pretext tribute gathering. In the clash that ensued, a few Burun including their chief were killed. The British made strong protests to Empress Zawditu and the whole question of boundary raids was raised and discussed at the prime minister's office in London in July 1924 when Ras Tafari arrived there

1. Mars'e Hazan, Zawditu, p.37.

2. SIR 154, May 1907.

3. FO 141/409, encl. in Nickerson to Wilson, 12.4.07; encl. in Wilson to ADI, 28.4.07.

during his European tour.¹ The chief inspiration of the raid seems to have been Dajach Birru, who had been sent from the capital as the governor of Qellam on the death of Jote. Mardasa was a reluctant participant, sending some local officials to serve as guides at the request of Birru, who was apparently trying to revive the authority that Jote had exercised in the area before the boundary delimitation of 1902 placed it on the Sudanese side. Wasana, who had in fact accompanied the party to Warragara, in effect exposed Birru when he admitted in Addis Ababa, where he had been summoned, that they went to Warragara with the full knowledge that, in doing so, they were violating an international boundary.²

While it may be difficult to ascribe a monopoly of guilt to the Amhara governor and his lieutenant, it looks certain that Jote's sons had too soft a heart for the people of Warragara to indulge in uninhibited raiding. Wasana, during his interview in Addis Ababa, revealed that his family had large land-holdings in the district. Interspersed with the Burun, there were a number of Oromo settlers and the name Warragara itself could be an Oromo designation meaning "People of the Garre", Garre being the other name for Khor Jikaw.

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1. Haile Sellassie, p.84; FO 371/9986, Stack to Russell, 8.5.24, 17.5.24; Bullock to acting GG, 13.8.24.
 2. FO 371/8406, Russell to Curzon, 30.9.23. British sources are uniformly abusive of Birru and his subordinate, Fitawrari Fanta, "who are apparently a law unto themselves and have no intention of observing the boundary if it can be transgressed in safety." FO 371/9986, Stack to Russell, 17.5.24. Stack goes on to describe them as "nothing more than border brigands". Ibid.

Traditionally, the area had been under Jote's influence and paid tribute to him. Even as late as the time of the incident described above, one of the captives stated in front of Ras Tafari that they had never heard of the British.¹ Jote's sons did recognize British authority in the area but, in view of its rich commercial and agricultural prospects, wanted to obtain some concessions. In 1910, Mardasa expressed his wish for a direct road from his district to Kodok on the White Nile via Warragara to rival the Gambella route.² In 1923, Wasana also entertained the idea of establishing a trading station at Warragara and was willing to pay tribute to the Sudan government in return for permission to develop "the ancestral lands".³

A trading post was eventually established near Kigille, much to Mardasa's gratification; he suggested that it be christened Wursa.⁴ Earlier, he had shown his zeal for frontier peace by giving the newly established police post of the Sudan government warning of an impending attack sponsored once again by Birru.⁵ Both Mardasa and the Sudan authorities had high hopes of the trading post. The former exulted in "the establishment of friendly trade relations between the Buruns and local Abyssinians".⁶ The latter had an even more

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Russell, 10.10.25; FO 1/44, Gwynn report of 26.7.00 in Wingate to FO, 2.9.00.
 2. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Thesiger to Phipps, 16.8.10. Thesiger mistakenly calls him "Mashesha".
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Russell, 10.10.23, 12.9.23.
 4. SMIR 367, Feb 1925.
 5. SMIR 366, Jan 1925.
 6. SMIR 367, Feb 1925.

grandiose image of the post rivalling not only Kurmuk but also Gambella.¹ While such a situation scarcely came about, the district grew in importance both as a commercial centre and as an asylum for refugees from Birru's oppressive rule.²

Al-Sitt Amina and the Slave Trade

To the north, there was another settlement which, like Warragara, had trans frontier loyalties. This was Jebel Ura, abode of al-Sitt Amina, wife of Khojali al-Hasan who had migrated to the Sudan with Hamid Hasan in 1905. Initially it was doubtful whether she was going to settle there permanently. Mahdi, her son by Khojali who took over control on the flight of Hamid, wrote a letter asking her to return to Asosa.³ She was unmoved by her son's request and settled in the Sudan for good, obtaining permission to cultivate and pay taxes. Khojali visited her from time to time, as in August 1911, when he was allowed to make such visits provided he did not bring along an armed escort.⁴ In return for this concession, the Sudan authorities demanded that he make efforts to curb the transfrontier raids originating from his district.⁵

1. SMIR 370, May 1925.

2. SMIR 378, Jan 1926.

3. FO 141/393, Wingate to Owen, 2.5.05; SIR 164, Mar 1908.

4. SIR 201 & 205, Apr & Aug 1911.

5. DUR 182/1/1, Butler to Wingate, 12.7.12. See FO 371/3500 for the list of raids in question.

Interestingly enough, too, rather than al-Sitt Amina being lured back to Asosa, it was her son Mahdi Khojali who applied for similar cultivation rights for some twenty of his men in 1924. Permission was granted on payment of a sum of money as guarantee against interference with the Burun or other local inhabitants. Administratively, the freshly arrived cultivators were placed under al-Sitt Amina.¹ Eventually, she was recognised as umda of the whole group of settlements.² Apparently, her district served as a reserve of military potential for Khojali, as in 1920 when, during his mobilization against Muhammad Wad Mahmud, he asked her to send him all her young slaves.³ It was even said that she had dreams of leading a military campaign across the boundary and liberating Asosa from Ethiopian rule. In such ambitious designs, she had the moral backing of people like the makk of Keili, who was anxious to see the whole of the sa'id under British protection, and the wealth and power deriving from the gold deposits at Abenqoro and Murtha Soro, where she employed some two hundred slaves. And it was on a charge of slave dealing that she was finally imprisoned in November 1929.⁴ She was discharged on grounds of health in December, 1935, before completing the ten year term imposed on her, and was sent back to her folks at

1. CRO Intel 1/5/23, DC Kurmuk to govr. Funj, 23.1.24.

2. SIR 369, Apr 1925.

3. CRO Intel 2/23/186, mamur to insepector Kurmuk, 21.6.20.

4. Atieb, pp. 49-50.

Beggi after signing an undertaking that she would not venture again within twenty miles of the boundary.¹

Here, it may be of interest to look in some detail into the question of slavery and the slave trade in the said. For the region has often been one of the targets of anti-slavery campaigners, next perhaps only to southwestern Ethiopia. Much of the known slave trade in the region seems to date from the nineteenth century, i.e. after the beginning of Watawit rule in the region. The Funj/Hamaj rulers of the region, though, are reputed to have introduced enslavement as a form of punishment for murder and sorcery. They also paid part of their tribute to their new Egyptian overlords in the nineteenth century in the form of slaves, although they had to buy these from elsewhere.² Only after the periodic Egyptian exactions of the nineteenth century and the subsequent Ansar raids are the Watawit reported to have consolidated their ascendancy, and the Berta, reduced in numbers and with their power and unity broken, to have been subjected to slavery.³

The years 1923-26 saw the peak in the transfrontier

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1. SMR 83, Nov-Dec 1935.
 2. Arkell Papers, Chataway to DI, 13.8.25.
 3. Arkell Papers, pp. 2,4,6. This looks on the whole a feasible thesis, despite the possibility that both Arkell and Chataway may have been taken in too much by the post-Mahdiyya British attitude, which tended to paint Arab rule in the Sudan in general and the Mahdist period in particular in the darkest of colours.

slave trade this century.¹ This was a period of instability in the region following the campaign to subdue Muhammad Wad Mahmud and its aftermath. There were 24 known cases of import of slaves into the Sudan in 1923, 34 in 1924, 29 in 1925, and 25 in 1926. Around 1926 Khojali al-Hasan, on orders from the central government, went through the ritual motions of proscribing the slave trade; the penalty for trespassing was to be 10 wagia of gold on the seller and 25 wagia on the purchaser. But at about the same time, Khojali was crowning his victory over Bela Shangul by imposing tributes of 500 slaves on Muhammad Tur al-Guri, and of 100 slaves each on lesser chiefs, including Muhammad Khojali. The vanquished managed to raise 322 slaves among them, Muhammad Tur al-Guri contributing 200. These were shared equally between Khojali and Dajach Birru's representative from Sayo who had led a contingent of 500 men in Khojali's campaign against Ibrahim. Subsequently two of Muhammad's chieftains fled and settled in the Sudan when they were asked to pay the balance of the tribute of slaves imposed on them. Khojali also forced Muhammad Wad Mahmud's brothers and relatives to pay tribute in slaves and gold. In Beshir, Khojali's brother, Abd al-

1. At any rate on the basis of the available figures: Arkell papers, tables, which however record cases after 1912 only. As the report was compiled in 1928, it is probable, and understandable, that only cases of that decade may have been given prominence and earlier ones omitted largely through lack of information.

Rahim, demanded a total tribute of 100 wagia of gold. Those who could not raise the required sum were forced to pawn their slaves at the rate of a slave per wagia demanded; a wagia bore 10 PT. interest per day. Following the capture of their leader, some of Wad Mahmud's followers too engaged in large-scale organized banditry, roaming the sa'id and seizing slaves.¹

The Berta clearly formed the great bulk of the slaves exported from Ethiopia to the Sudan.² Next came the Koma, followed by the Oromo, Amam, and Burun. Although most of them were already slaves or children of slave parents when sold, some of the Koma and most of the Oromo were freeborn and sold into slavery. Their age ranged from 3 to 37. Five year old Huddi, sold sometime in 1923, had only a hazy recollection of her village "on the plains a few miles from a small Jebel, from which a stream ran past the village on the North side."³ A great number of them were in their teens. There were in any case very few above the age of 35.

The chief agencies of this human traffic were the local rulers themselves. Of some 208 slaves known to have been sold into the Sudan from Ethiopia between 1912 and 1927, 54 were sold by or through the agency of Mahdi Khojali and Fiqi Ishaq, his wakil at Sergoli, both under the benevolent

1. Ibid., pp. 10-13.
2. I am using here my tabulated version of the exceedingly useful and instructive appendices of the Arkell Papers, as well as Dr. Arkell's own tables enclosed therein.
3. App. S/19.

patronage of Khojali al-Hasan himself. The share of the notorious al-Sitt Amina, who actually resided on the Sudanese side of the boundary but obtained many of her slaves from the Ethiopian side, was 36. The largest number, 60, came from Beshir, sold largely by or through Khojali Nurein. Of these, 49 were sold between 1923 and 1926, a period when the people of Beshir had to pay the exorbitant tribute to Khojali mentioned above. Belwara on the Sudanese side, the abode of many prominent refugees from Beshir, contributed 19 slaves to the total. There was also a case of the nagadras of Beggi selling an Oromo "muwallad" who had been kidnapped by his soldiers.¹

With regard to prices, Sudanese merchants paid from £E 3.500 to £E 30 for slaves they bought on the Ethiopian side. Young females generally fetched the highest price. Children did not attract so high prices: Dalzei b. Tulla, a 6 year old Berta who could only remember her mother's name and "that her mother wept when some black men came and took her away to Mahdi [Khojali]", was eventually sold by him for £E 7.² The lowest price, £E 3.500, was paid for Faragalla Aduda, a 35 year old Berta whose only consolation came when he found his wife and sons among the slaves later rounded up in the Southern District, White Nile Province.³ The highest price, £E 30,

1. App. 87.

2. App. E

3. App. Y

was recorded for Khadiga b. Hasan, a 14 year old Berta girl born at Goha who changed masters three times (one of them Mahdi Khojali) before she was sold in 1919.¹ There were cases of barter as well. Nila, alias Nyerto b. Ginda, a Burun of about 27 years of age captured as a young girl by Ibrahim and Muhammad Wad Mahmud, was bartered for a horse after two unsuccessful attempts to escape. She was later sold in the Sudan, together with her infant daughter, for £E 25.² 3 wagia of gold were paid for Said Rizgallah, a Berta boy of about 5 years of age, in June 1925.³ At the valuation of 1 wagia of gold per slave mentioned above, that must have struck Fiqi Muhammad Ahmad of Beshir, who sold the boy, as a fair bargain.

The slaves were often sold in the Sudan at a profit. But the margin varied. It could be as narrow as £E 1, as in the case of a 57 year old Amam, Bahrel Nil, who was bought for £E 6 and sold for £E 7;⁴ or as wide as nearly £E 34, as in that of Bakhita Zerga, a Berta girl of about 15 years of age bought at Dul in 1920 for £E 26.500 and sold later in the Sudan for £E 60.⁵ Some of the slaves were subsequently re-sold, one or two more than once. This would generally be at a profit, Thus, Gabartallah Beshir,

1. App. 62.

2. App. 73.

3. App. 35.

4. App. 29.

5. App. 66.

alias Mursal (a Berta boy) was first sold in the Sudan for £E 17, and subsequently re-sold twice for £E 35 and £E 50.¹ There were however a few cases of re-sales at a loss, in one case a very sharp loss indeed: Allahgabu, a Watatwit aged 7 who was captured soon after the defeat of Muhammad Wad Mahmud by Khojali, was first sold in the Sudan for £E 30 and later re-sold for half that amount.² Medina b. Ibrahim, born free of a Hadendowa father and a Jabarti (Ethiopian Muslim) mother, was bought for £E 18.200 in Ethiopia and sold for £E 18 in the Sudan because "As she had the appearance of a free woman, no Rufaa wife would tolerate her possession by her husband."³ Some others were purchased with the specific purpose of assisting their buyer's household in domestic chores. A few, like Saida, a Berta woman of 25 sold by Fiqi Ishaq for £E 8.500 in 1922, were likewise kept by their original purchasers and bore them children.⁴

The ways in which the victims got into the hands of their sellers were as varied. Kidnapping by the Watawit was a common form of acquiring slaves. The zeal of Khojali's agents in this respect defied geographical barriers. In 1925, they abducted a slave of a Fitawrari Walda Mikael in Shawa (most probably in Addis Ababa) and despatched her to Mahdi.⁵ Most of the Oromo slaves had been kidnapped and

1. App. 47.

2. App. 48.

3. App. 116.

4. App. P/16; cf. app. 45.

5. App. 91.

sold into slavery by other Oromo, in one case by a brother-in-law.¹ On other occasions, what had the deceptive appearance of errands to Khojali Nurein or al-Sitt Amina on the other side of the boundary led into the slave trader's net.² Mahdi acquired some of his slaves from his subjects in lieu of tribute. He was in turn the main supplying agent to al-Sitt Amina and Fiqi Ishaq. The disturbances of the early 1920's involving Muhammad Wad Mahmud and Khojali also proved propitious for slaving and trading. One of the beneficiaries was Fiqi Muhammad al-Mardi of Fadasi, who prayed for Khojali's victory and was given 2 Berta slaves for his trouble. He hired two factors for £E 7 and £E 2 and personally went down to the White Nile Province to supervise the sale of his booty for £E 28 and £E 29.500.³ Many slaves had seen two or three masters before their eventual sale into the Sudan and probably made as many attempts at escape, some successful, others not so.

Once acquired, the slaves would often have what were called "shillukhs" (facial marks) cut on their faces in the Watawit fashion. When Medana b. Burraio Hasan, a 16 year old Amam girl whose parents were slaves of Khojali al-Hasan, was sold by Mahdi about 1927, the cuts on her cheeks had not yet quite healed. Nearly 20 other slaves were sent to Shawa, presumably as a form of tribute, at about the same time that

1. App. 130.

2. Apps. T/20 and Y/25.

3. App. 78.

Medana was transferred to Mahdi's custody for eventual sale.¹ The results of cultural assimilation were also evident in the way in which a few of the Berta, particularly those bought from Mahdi's and al-Sitt Amina's household, could speak Arabic, some of them to the neglect of their native tongue.² The Sudanese purchasers were often agents who were given money in advance by those selling slaves and then paid commission, often in the form of part or all of the money they had saved in the transaction, plus sometimes an additional bonus. There was a case of "primitive capital accumulation" when a party of traders invested the profits from a successful session in dammur trade in Kosti and returned to Beshir for another round.³

The Kurmuk Conference

Mahdi Khojali continued to administer his father's domain with a ruthlessness which, by comparison, gave the image of the old sheikh a touch of benevolence. The prolonged absence of Khojali in the capital gave Mahdi freedom to exercise his autocratic rule with impunity. Relatives and ancestral rivals found themselves in equal danger of total absorption by him. One of his most bitter conflicts was with his half-brother Ahmad, who had fled to the Sudan in

1. App. 53.

2. Apps. E, F.

3. App. 98.

1927 claiming that his father had instructed Mahdi to kill him.¹ After a visit to Addis Ababa, where he had gone to present his grievances, Ahmad returned to reassert the authority in Beggi which he had apparently exercised before his flight in 1927. There was a clash between Ahmad and Bimbashi, Khojali's muqaddam sent by Mahdi as a screen between his and Ahmad's forces. Bimbashi was killed and Ahmad was imprisoned by the governor of Sayo, Dajach Makonnin, who had apparently been assigned to mediate.¹ In Bela Shangul, Muhammad Tur al-Guri had been succeeded on his death by his son Mustafa. With the constant flight of prominent members of the ruling family as well as his slaves to the Sudan and Khojali's growing grip on the Bela Shangul market, Mustafa's power in his district was nominal and hollow. With Mahdi in control, he felt even more restricted and is reported to have sent presents to Khojali "to meet the old man's heart and get his independence acknowledged while the implacable son is absent" in Addis Ababa.²

Early in June 1932, a group of Watawit in the service of Mahdi raided the Berta village of Shima in the Sudan. Over fifty of the inhabitants were abducted.³ This incident formed the background for the Kurmuk conference of January and February 1933 which, from the point of view

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1. SMR 8-10, 1929; FO 371/13830, acting GG to Lorraine, 1.10.29. 1/61/431
 2. SMR 65, May-June 1934; CRO BNP/, DC South Funj District to govr. Funj, 18.4.31. It is doubtful if Khojali would have condoned Mustafa's independence, but the quotation suggests that between father and son, the former had come to be regarded as the lesser evil. Cf. Arkell Papers, p.12.
 3. FO 371/16098, Huddleston to Lorraine, 2.7.32.

of the Sudan government, proved the very antithesis of the Gambella conference held some eight months before.¹ The Sudan delegation to the conference was led by the governor of Funj province, C. H. Thompson. The Ethiopian delegation included, beside Sheikh Khojali, Dajach Haylu, governor of "South Wallaga", Qañazmach Kasa, and Ato Daba Birru of the foreign ministry. The conference was convened at the request of the Sudan authorities and had a more ambitious scope than just discussing the Shima raid, which was an item in the agenda. Included in the list of demands set forward by the Sudan delegation were the restoration of all persons captured in eleven raids by agents of Khojali between May 1930 and November 1932, the handing over of those responsible for the raids to Sudan authorities, the trial in the presence of the British consul for western Abyssinia and "adequate punishment" of persons known to have been involved in the sale or purchase of the captives, and the extradition of Sudanese offenders taking refuge in Ethiopian territory. The restorations and extraditions were all to be effected by 30th March 1933.²

The optimism, not to say arrogance, underlying such a formulation of demands, was probably engendered by the successful outcome of the Gambella conference. But it was dispelled as soon as the negotiations started. The Sudan

1. See above, pp. 156-8.

2. FO 371/16990, Maffey to Lorraine, 1.1.33; memo on Kurmuk negotiations, 1.3.33, app.B.

delegation met two major stumbling blocks. First, the Ethiopian delegation refused to accept the allegations of the Sudan government at their face value and insisted on a fresh and joint hearing of each individual case before making any restoration of captives or extradition of offenders. Already, at an early stage of the negotiations, the Sudan delegation had realized the untenableness of its claim to judge Ethiopian subjects involved in the raids and had acquiesced in the suggestion that the offenders be tried in Ethiopia and the Sudan authorities be informed of the sentences. The second, and even more intractable point was Khojali's determination to turn the conference from his own public indictment, which the British wanted it to be, to a forum for a diplomatic tug-of-war. He presented his own list of complaints. These included twenty-two cases of refugees from Asosa who later returned abducted women and children (Sudan authorities said their own wives and children) as well as money and cattle back to the Sudan. The second set of complaints referred to persons like Sheikh Hamid¹ and a certain Sheikh Geili who fled to the Sudan with "arms of the Negus". The position of the Ethiopian delegation on these two points was strengthened when the government in Addis Ababa sent fresh instructions calling for a joint examination of the demands both of the Sudan delegation and of Khojali.²

1. See above, pp. 175-8.

2. FO 371/16990, Khartoum to Barton, 7.2.33; memo on Kurmuk negotiations, 1.3.33, app. C & D.

In general, both the Sudan delegation and British authorities elsewhere found the suggestion of joint hearing and Khojali's counter-claims offensive. The British minister in Addis Ababa proved an exception by conceding that joint hearing and "balancing of results" was a regular practice in frontier meetings. He even went further and argued that hearing Khojali's complaints might further the cause of the anti-slavery campaign as they presumably involved mostly escaped slaves. Rupture on a weak case would only strengthen Khojali's position and weaken central authority over him. It would also create an inauspicious setting for the forthcoming Tana negotiations.¹ The reaction of the Foreign Office in London ranged from utter rejection of the proposals to a state of alert to implement the controversial "forward policy".² The Sudan delegation described the proposals as a "complete misconception of the scope and purpose of the meeting", as they assumed that the Sudan's and Khojali's claims could be balanced. This, it argued, was inadmissible, as "it would have made the liberty of enslaved Sudan subjects a matter of barter". Moreover, Khojali's claims either mostly involved cases of refugee slaves, who could not be forcibly repatriated unless they were proven criminals, or "deal with ancient history". Finally, on 13th February, the Sudan delegation broke off negotiations, claiming that the instructions to the

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1. FO 371/16990, Barton to FO, 14.2.33; Barton to Khartoum, 14.2.33.
 2. FO 371/16990, minutes on Khartoum to Barton, 7.2.33, for "forward policy", see below, pp. 220-5.

Ethiopian delegation were incompatible with Sudan requirements.¹ Too late, the Sudan authorities realized that the Ethiopian foreign ministry had in fact instructed its delegation on 13th February to hand over the captives to the Sudan delegation and to agree to the trial of the offenders in front of the two delegations.² Too late, the foreign office recanted its intransigence on the issue of joint hearing and advised a policy of avoiding a total breakdown of the negotiations by all possible means. If such a rupture was inevitable, Khojali should be made to appear as the chief culprit.³ The Sudan government continued to resent Khojali's tactical manoeuvre which transformed what was intended to be an investigation of Sudan complaints against him into "a sort of juridical hearing at the end of which it would be open to Ethiopians to say that having heard Khojali's witnesses they were not satisfied that incidents ever occurred". It contrasted Ras Mulugeta's conciliatory attitude at the Gambella conference with Khojali's "obduracy", hailing the former as "a man of very different stamp", forgetting the fact that he could afford to give in because he, unlike

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1. FO 371/16990, memo, 1.3.33; encl. in Maffey to Campbell, 31.4.33. Maffey makes the point that Sheikh Hamid, one of the persons on Khojali's list, had already returned and died some twenty-two years before.
 2. FO 371/16990, Hiruy to Barton, 13.2.33; GG to Campbell, 12.3.33.
 3. FO 371/16990, FO to Lorraine, 17.2.33; minutes on Khartoum to Cairo, 20.2.33.

Khojali, was not defending vital interests and his own local standing.¹

Interestingly, the Sudan delegation, exasperated as it was by Khojali's political agility, was not unduly unfair in its final assessment of his personality:

"Sheikh Khogali el Hassan, a man of dark complexion reputed to be over a hundred years old but very sprightly, is without doubt a strong and forcible character.... He is said to administer his country well, according to his lights, and there is less lawlessness in his domain than in those of his Ethiopian neighbours, but he turns a blind eye to the affairs on the frontier. He has no love for the Ethiopian proper, nor has he in present circumstances any love for the British, and there is no doubt that the imprisonment of his wife Sitt Amina is as gall and bitterness to him."²

The Foreign Office, though conciliatory on the question of procedure, viewed Khojali's final victory with extreme resentment. "It seems clear," Wallinger, a secretary in the Foreign Office lamented, "that Sheikh Khojali has been able to snap his fingers at the representatives of the Central Govt." Rather wishfully, it banked its hopes on the day of reckoning when Emperor Haile Sellassie would deal once and for all with the sheikh.³ And the British legation in Addis Ababa kept on prodding the foreign minister in that direction.⁴ More energetically, it continued to explore

1. FO 371/16990, Khartoum to Cairo, 20.2.33.

2. FO 371/16990, memo on negotiations, 1.3.33.

3. FO 371/16990, minutes on GG to Campbell, 12.3.33.

4. FO 371/16991, Barton to Hiruy, 31.5.33; Barton to Simon, 9.6.33; Broadmead to Hiruy, 18.7.33; 25.10.33.

the possibility of implementing the "forward policy".

The "Forward Policy"

This was an aggressive frontier policy conceived at the Foreign Office in London. Whether the message ever reached the Ethiopian government is not quite evident. But the debate revolving around the plan and involving Khartoum, the British legation in Addis Ababa, the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office in London, provides an interesting insight into their varied stakes and priorities in Ethiopia. In a memorandum of 5th July 1932 on "slave raids" from Ethiopia into the Sudan, the Foreign Office recommended the use of aircraft to pursue and attack raiders, violating the boundary if necessary. This was to be followed by a punitive expedition to destroy the villages of the raiders and to take hostages.¹

The high commissioner in Egypt, Sir Percy Lorraine, expressed strong reservations about the recommendations. Aside from the possibility of military engagements between the two countries that the implementation of such a policy would raise, he hinted at the embarrassing prospect of an Ethiopian protest at the League of Nations against such boundary violations. The ideal solution, he suggested, was to persuade the Ethiopian government to grant the Sudan only the right to cross the boundary on punitive expeditions against raiders,

1. FO 371/16098.

though it was not inconceivable that the former might request reciprocal rights.¹

The Sudan government argued the need to frame separate policies for the two sections of the frontier: the unadministered plains of the Anyuua and Nuer "savages", and the relatively better controlled hills of the "more or less civilized" Watawit. The root of the problem in the southern section was the boundary: "It would perhaps be difficult to find in all the world a more inept line of boundary than that nominally separating the Upper Nile and Mongalla Provinces of the Sudan from Abyssinia, and ineptitude has reached its apogee in the Gambella (Baro) salient." The argument inevitably slid into the all-too-familiar theme: the incorporation of the salient into the Sudan as the only lasting and logical solution to the problem. Failing that, the Sudan authorities recommended such administrative palliatives as the placing of both Gore and Sayo under a single authority, preferably that of "the friendly Governor of Gorei, Ras Mulugheta"; the maintenance of good relations between the governor of Upper Nile Province and his Ethiopian counterpart; and Ethiopian permission for the district commissioner of Nasser to extend his administrative jurisdiction over Nuer migrating seasonally to the Ethiopian side for grazing. Rather more than a palliative was the suggestion that the Sudan request permission from Ethiopia to ignore the boundary when necessary and send aircraft for reconnaissance or punitive

1. FO 371/16098, Lorraine to Simon, 23.7.32.

purposes.¹

In the northern section, the Sudan government recommended a policy of inducing its Ethiopian counterpart towards proper administrative control. Rectification of the boundary would be hard to justify because the arms traffic was not as acute a problem as in the south; it would in any case be strongly resented by the Ethiopian authorities in view of the mineral wealth of the area. Air action across the boundary, even if done with Ethiopian permission, was liable to create political complications.

"There would in short be a danger of the Sudan with its limited military forces and depleted exchequer, finding itself to all intents and purposes at war with Abyssinia, and faced with a possibility of a reversion to a state of affairs which ruled when the armies of the Khalifa and of King John fought pitched battles near Gallabat. To court the risk of such a state of affairs would be unthinkable."²

From the Air Ministry and the War Office in London, the Foreign Office got encouragement to push ahead with its policy. The former in particular, apparently welcoming "what will be for them an interesting tactical exercise",³ described the area as "eminently suited" for air operations. Instead of interceptive forays, they advised a policy of attacking settlements to deprive raiders the immunity from retaliation

1. FO 371/16098, MacMichael to Campbell, 11.8.32.

2. Ibid.

3. So quipped one of the FO officials in the minutes, FO 371/16099, Air Ministry to FO, 13.10.32.

that they had thitherto enjoyed. Ethiopian cooperation would be helpful to get "exact tribal information", but not indispensable as long as the Sudan had secured liberty of action.¹

On the basis of the above recommendations, the Foreign Office drafted a despatch to the British minister in Addis Ababa. It endorsed the Sudan's recommendation of the cession of the Baro salient. The minister was to tell the emperor that, in cases of his failure to prevent boundary raids, he would not object to, but rather facilitate, punitive actions undertaken by the Sudan against "local chiefs whose actions are as much in defiance of the Emperor's own sovereignty as of the rights of neighbouring populations."²

The Sudan government, while appreciating the firm tone of the despatch, doubted the wisdom of brandishing commitments which the poor state of its finances made scarcely feasible. It also feared that punitive actions by the Sudan could only succeed in embroiling it in continuous warfare with the border peoples. Moreover, it questioned the legality of a step which assumed that the inability of a government to control its subjects automatically entitled a limitrophe government to do so.³ The high commissioner in Cairo sympathized with the financial predicament of the Sudan.⁴

1. FO 371/16099, Air Ministry to FO, 13.10.32; WO to FO, 31.10.32.

2. FO 371/16099, draft of FO to Barton, Dec 1932.

3. FO 371/16990, Maffey, to Lorraine, 7.1.33. Cf. FO 371/16099, Minutes on FO to Barton, Dec 1932.

4. FO 371/16990, Lorraine to Simon, 21.1.33.

The Colonial Office joined the chorus of moderation. It was apprehensive both of the possible repercussions that a "forward policy" on the Sudan frontier would have on Kenya's boundary with Ethiopia and the injurious effect of such a policy on the negotiations then going on between the British Somaliland and Ethiopia.¹

The Foreign Office, while conceding the Sudan's point about the rewording of the despatch, refused to relent, especially after the breakdown of the Kurmuk negotiations. It was unimpressed by the observation that the emperor was genuinely desirous of bringing the frontier peoples under full control, as long as he remained unable to carry out his intentions. It resented the Sudan's habitual harping on the poor state of its finances, arguing that the Ethiopian government could be forced to defray part of the expense by being asked to pay compensation for raids committed by its subjects. It also deplored the association of the issue of raids with other desiderata such as the British Somaliland negotiations which deprived it of its urgency.²

In the end, Khartoum won. Just as the failure of the Kurmuk conference had goaded the Foreign Office on in its aggressive policy, the satisfactory implementation of the Gambella agreement inspired optimism and dictated caution.

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1. FO 371/16990, CO to FO, 3.4.33. CO's fears for Kenya were apparently inspired by governor Kenya to secretary of state for the colonies, 14.3.33; FO 371/16991, CO to FO, 27.4.33.
 2. FO 371/16990, minutes on Lorraine to Simon, 21.1.33; FO to CO, 4.4.33; memo by M. Peterson, counsellor in FO, 24.4.33,

The Foreign Office postponed the "forward policy".¹ The final attenuated version of the draft despatch to the British minister in Addis Ababa was an almost word for word repetition of Khartoum's recommendations. These included administrative cooperation between frontier governors, the establishment of a single authority over Gore and Sayo, and a discreet suggestion of rectification of the boundary so as to include the Baro salient in the Sudan. On the Bela Shangul section, the Ethiopian government was to be persuaded to exercise proper administrative control, which was within its competence, and the role of Khojali in bringing about the breakdown of negotiations at Kurmuk was to be emphasized. Finally, the emperor was to be told that the Sudan reserved the right to punish raiders if Ethiopia failed to do so promptly.²

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1. FO 371/16991, FO to CO, 7.6.33; FO to Barton, 27.5.33.
 2. FO 371/16991, encl. in FO to Broadmead, 7.7.33.

CHAPTER 4

The Gambella Trading Post (I)

Probably the most significant aspect of relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan in western Ethiopia is the chequered career of the Gambella trading post. Although drawing a substantial portion of western Ethiopian trade, the history of the post, at any rate on the basis of British sources, reads like one long catalogue of problems and setbacks. Viewed in abstraction, its establishment had all the appearance of a stroke of diplomatic genius. It could be seen as a brilliant move by the British to avert the virtual commercial hegemony in Ethiopia that the Franco-Ethiopian railway seemed to guarantee to the French. Put in its proper context, it proved a venture embarked upon without taking full cognizance of the inherent geographical and political problems of the area.

The idea of utilizing the navigable waters of the Baro for commercial purposes was not new.¹ Although the commercial orientation of the districts under Dajach Jote was more towards the Watawit sheikhdoms to the north, trade between the Oromo of the plateau and the Anyuua of the plains also existed prior to 1902. The Anyuua of the Gambella region obtained iron, copper, and beads from the Lega Oromo;

1. See above, p. 105.

the latter in turn purchased cotton from the Anyuuaa. Some of the Anyuuaa, harassed by the Nuer, also reportedly sold themselves into slavery to the Oromo.¹ But the Gambella trading post was a much more ambitious undertaking that aimed at tapping the rich commercial potential of western Ethiopia and drawing the region into the economic orbit of the Sudan. Even after the expected economic gains had failed to materialize, the British stuck to the post as a matter of prestige and political necessity. That this latter argument was not futile was proven in 1936 when the Western Galla Confederation, an Oromo organization that tried to avoid Italian conquest by seeking British mandate, adduced as one of its arguments the long-standing commercial links of the region with the Sudan.²

The Uncertain Start

The post was established in pursuance of Article IV of the treaty of 15th May 1902 delimiting the boundary between Ethiopia and the Sudan. The treaty provided for a commercial enclave "in the neighbourhood of Itang", and it

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1. Bahru, pp. 35-37; Marno, pp. 78-79; Austin, Among Swamps and Giants, p. 30, also "Survey", p. 502; SIR 126, Jan 1905, app. A; J.M. Schuwer, Petermanns Mittheilungen, 29 (1883), p. 194; Oswin Kohler, "Zur Frage des Galla-Wanderungen im Nilotischen Sudan," Afrika und Uebersee, XXXVI (1952), p.12.
 2. FO 371/20206, Yilma to Eden, 11.6.36; DUR 104/17, Winder report, 1936. See G.N. Britten Some Ethiopian Responses to Italian Conquest and Occupation, 1935-1941, MA dissertation (SOAS, 1971), for the confederation and related issues.

was near Itang that the post was first established in January 1904.¹ This was preceded by a meeting of the principal merchants of Khartoum and Omdurman at the Khartoum provincial office on 27th June 1903, when the commercial potential of the enclave was discussed. Among the questions raised at this meeting were the possibilities of importing alcohol into and exporting ivory from Ethiopia, two issues that were to remain a source of much debate throughout the early years of the post.² After conferring with Major (later Colonel) G. Matthews, governor of Fashoda (later Upper Nile) Province, Gwynn, the officer entrusted with the task of demarcating the boundary, sent a list of articles that Sudan traders could supply. He also recommended the adoption of a liberal policy by the government to encourage the trade in its early years, including the granting of free transport of the first stock of merchandise by government steamers and of rent-free allotments to merchants in the enclave for two years. He suggested that small pedlars be kept out of the enterprise as much as possible as only big traders could weather the inevitable loss of the first year. He also strongly recommended that the American Mission be offered a site in the enclave as it could play the double role of "pacifying" the Anyuua and serving as a witness in disputes between merchants and local officials.³

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1. SIR 114, Jan 1904; FO 141/378, Findlay to Clerk, 11.10.03.
 2. CRO Intel 2/24/188, report, n.d.
 3. CRO Intel 2/24/188; Gwynn report, n.d.

Itang did not last more than one trading season. It was far from the plateau without being to any appreciable degree nearer to the easily navigable stretch of the river. The first encounter between the Ethiopians and the traders from the Sudan almost proved a disastrous failure when the two sides could not agree on prices. The Sudan government inspector accompanying the traders, Lt. Colonel H.H. Wilson, averted a total breakdown by promising government assistance towards covering their costs if the Sudan traders made some concessions. The traders further failed to bring most of the articles in demand such as Maria Theresa dollars (MTD), swords and silk stuffs. High prices also made it impossible for them to purchase the ivory they had coveted so much. On the other hand, although the virtual monopoly that he exercised over the Gore market curtailed their bargaining options, Ras Tassamma's apparent enthusiasm for the project was an encouraging factor. Wilson was received by "a large guard of honour of mounted and foot soldiers." The governor also made a proclamation permitting all merchants to trade at Itang and instructed Udial, the Anyuaa nyiya in charge of the low country, to have tukul (huts) built for the traders. To set an example to highland Ethiopians who very much dreaded the lowlands, he ordered his nagadras, Birru, to go down with some merchants.¹

The transfer of the trading post from Itang to Gambella was probably inspired, at least in part, by consideration of the additional obstacle to trade that the former

1. SIR 116, Mar 1904, app. See Bulpett, pp.54-56, 80-82, for a description of the Itang trading post.

created by its distance from the plateau.¹ On 8th October 1904, Ras Tassamma, in response to British request, authorized his representative, Shalaqa Takaliñ, to allow the transfer of the post to Gambella.² This did not solve the more chronic problems of Gambella trade - the steep Guma escarpment between the plains and the Bure-Gore plateau, the coincidence of the rainy season, which aggravated the problems of communication, with the "open season" (June-November) when steamers could go as far as the post, as well as the low level of local demand for European goods.³ But it brought the post slightly nearer the plateau.

Wilson was immediately sent to effect the transfer and arrived at Itang on 30th October. He chose a site at the junction of the Baro and Jajjaba, a tributary, and this became the permanent site of the trading post. From there, Wilson, accompanied by the traders from the Sudan, made a tour of the main commercial centres on the plateau: Sayo, Bure and Gore. This was very much in the nature of an exercise in personal diplomacy to enlist the support of local authorities for the project and to familiarize the people with the products coming from the Sudan. The tour underlined basic problems of

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1. B.H. Jessen ("South-Western Abyssinia," CJ, XXV (1905), 171) at any rate recommended the transfer for precisely that reason. See also SIR 116, Mar 1904; FO 141/386, Cairo to Harrington, 8.5.04.
 2. FO 141/386, encl. in Harrington to Cromer, 8.10.04; Harrington to Cairo, 27.9.04, 17.10.04.
 3. SIR 118, May 1904.

Gambella trade, some of which were to recur later in the history of the post: the rather mixed response of local authorities to the whole project; the grasping attitude of the Sudan merchants who tried to sell their goods at exorbitant prices; and the restrictions on the purchase and sale of ivory.

The bid to open Gambella trade encountered much obstruction from Shalaga Takaliñ, Tassamma's representative at Bure, who denied that his superior had instructed him to open up the road for trade.¹ He further ordered that no goods were to be taken to the post, and flogged those who ignored the ban and confiscated their goods. Appeals to Qañazmach Indaylalu, his immediate superior and Tassamma's representative at Gore, were to little avail, as the latter proved not to be over-enthusiastic about promoting Gambella trade.² Qañazmach Naqi, the previous official at Gore, was more cooperative. He acknowledged that Tassamma had ordered him to assist all Ethiopian traders who wished to go down to the plains to trade. He also expressed his satisfaction at the transfer of the post nearer the plateau. The nagadras, Birru, made an awaj (decree) opening the trade and even concluded a contract with one of the Sudan merchants, Skandar Butros, to deliver 500 kantar³ of coffee and 300 kantar of bees-wax. The trader had meanwhile disposed of all the goods

1. SIR 126, Jan 1905, app.A.

2. FO 141/393, encl. in Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05.

3. 1 kantar = 99.05 lbs or 44.93 kg.

that he had brought along to the plateau. Jote, in Gidami, freely admitted that although Tassamma had formally proclaimed the opening of the Gambella route, he had closed the road pending direct instructions from Minilik. This might have been intended as much as an act of rebuff of Tassamma's authority as respect for Minilik's. He had thus detained the cattle drivers who had accompanied Wilson up to Nasser and Tawfikia during an earlier visit in March. Sudan merchants who went up to Sayo to trade were received with characteristic hospitality but no one came to do business with them, presumably afraid that they would thereby incur Jote's anger. Later, probably after he received instructions from the emperor, Jote began to show enthusiasm for the trade and hailed it as a good means of opening western Ethiopia.

The traders from the Sudan were also partly to blame for the poor beginning of the post. The big traders who had earlier declared their intention to go to the post did not do so; instead they lent their names to others who would otherwise have been barred from going. Those who did go were aiming at profits of 80 to 100%. The inspector had to intervene and fix the prices of their goods, allowing for a profit margin of 10%. He informed them that if they found his price list unacceptable they were free to return to Khartoum, but would forfeit the exemption from freight charges that they had been granted by the government. The merchants were also inadequately informed about the kinds of goods that were in demand in Ethiopia and had not brought with them such

items as swords, glass bottles or birille, and terai hats, which would have got a ready market.¹ The quest for accurate information about articles of export from Gambella and those desired for import into Ethiopia continued. Collecting specimens of both became one of the main tasks of the mamur at Gambella in this early period - a task made difficult, especially in connection with imports, by the mutual jealousies of the traders who tried to get an edge over their rivals by refusing to give any information about items in high demand in western Ethiopia.²

The attitude of the merchants towards Ethiopian officials also left much to be desired. They behaved with an arrogance and insolence born of confidence in the backing of European power. One merchant even went to the extent of calling the nagadras majnun to his face. In an attempt to exercise some degree of control over the situation, the acting governor of Upper Nile Province, then visiting the post, made a list of rules to regulate the conduct and activity of the merchants. The latter were for example to notify the nagadras through the mamur of their names and districts of operation. Ingoing merchandise was to be marked with the appropriate seal: ገንቦካ : ገበያ. በካንታራቸው ገረጽ፡ ነዋታ፡ ("Gambela Suk - the Negad Ras Burro [i.e. Birru] having been notified"). The nagadras would then assume responsibility for their safe

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1. SIR 126, Jan 1905, app.A.
 2. FO 141/393, Wilson to Riad, 26.5.05; encl. in Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05. These problems remained much in evidence as late as 1913; see A & P vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R. Gambella, 1913.

conduct. That would not exempt the merchants from punishment, however, including expulsion if just complaints were made against them.¹

The mamur of Gambella was scarcely less insolent in his conduct. He was quick to hoist the British and Egyptian flags in the enclave and intimidate most of the Anyuua into submitting to his authority. Tassamma was infuriated at such open interference in his administrative jurisdiction. The mamur was recalled and the replacement of the Egyptian officer by a British one was even considered, but was postponed until Gambella established itself as a viable undertaking. The acting mamur in any case succeeded in establishing more cordial relations with the Ethiopian authorities.²

The monopoly over the supply of ivory exercised by both Tassamma and Jote was another setback to Sudan traders and government officials alike, as they had placed great value on the ivory trade. The two governors had to pay part of their tribute to Minilik in ivory. They therefore barred all people under their authority from selling ivory to anyone but them at very low prices. After they had paid their tribute, they sold the remaining ivory at £E 35 to £E 40 per kantar.³ The price was about the same as that paid at the capital but was more profitable from the Sudan point of view as it included

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1. FO 141/393, encl. in Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05; ibid., app. IX C
 2. FO 141/393, encls. in Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05; app. III.
 3. SIR 126, Jan 1905, app. A; FO 141/393, Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05.

the share of customs due the Ethiopian authorities anyway and as the kantar weighed slightly more in the west. But the mamur apparently found the temptation of an illicit trade in ivory too strong to resist. The smuggling of ivory into his house may have been one of the reasons for his eventual dismissal.¹ Throughout the following years, the Sudan government was to spare little effort to win the lucrative ivory trade for Gambella, though it went about it with an uneasy combination of principle and self-interest.

Meanwhile, a concession to the Khartoum-based and British-financed Kordofan Trading Company to gather and export rubber through Gambella had a mixed reception in Sudan government circles. While no doubt appreciating the benefits of rubber export to Gambella trade, they viewed the growth of monopolies in such commodities as rubber and coffee as detrimental to trade in other products, as merchants would rush to acquire the former. Monopolies would also tend to deplete the price of supply articles and thus both kill the incentive for production and reduce customs receipts.² Khartoum merchants were even more perturbed by the monopoly.³ Nagadras Birru raised equally strong objections on the grounds of both profit and status. He found it beneath the dignity of a nagadras to be a supplying agent to two or three monopoly holders.⁴

1. FO 141/393, encl. in Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05.

2. FO 141/393, Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05; encl. in same.

3. FO 141/393, Cairo to Harrington, 30.11.05.

4. FO 141/393, encl. in Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05.

sum. 1 In One of the main objectives of the Sudan government was to make such powerful provincial governors as Ras Tassamma and Ras Walda Giyorgis personally interested in the growth of Gambella trade. It had only limited success. The interest and cooperation of Nagadras Birru was encouraging. But more substantial backing was necessary if Gambella was to thrive. Thus, Tassamma's participation in the formation of the first commercial company in the region, John Gerolimato & Co, by providing a third of the capital was welcome. The company had particular interest in starting the proper cultivation of coffee, in addition to the thorough exploitation of the wild coffee forests. It was hoped that Walda Giyorgis and other governors would follow suit and associate themselves with either the same company or other similar ventures.¹

A chronic problem of Gambella trade was the shortage of Maria Theresa dollars which seriously handicapped the capacity of Sudan traders to buy Ethiopian goods for export. From the start, the supply of dollars to traders became an important consideration of British officials.² The contract between Birru and Skandar Butros mentioned above set off a flurry of correspondence to make the 10,000 dollars needed available.³ On another occasion, the purchase of ivory offered by Tassamma had to await the supply of the requisite

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1. SIR 135, Oct 1905; FO 141/393, Harrington to Cromer, 5.9.05; Cairo to Harrington, 25.10.05.
 2. FO 141/393, ADI to agent general (Cairo), 28.2.05; Cromer to Harrington, 1.3.05.
 3. SIR 126, Jan 1905, app. A; FO 141/393, Muhammad Riad to Wilson, 25.3.05; SIR 126, Jan 1905, app.A.

sum.¹ In 1907, merchants are said to have lost most of the trade through an inadequate supply of MTD and the acting governor of Upper Nile Province requested the civil secretary in Khartoum to make available during the "open season" dollars to be issued on financial authority from Khartoum.² Tassamma apparently took advantage of the predicament of the Sudan merchants by lending them money at the rate of 72%.³ His son, Dajach Kabada, was later to dwarf his record by lending at the even more staggering rate of 900%.⁴ In one of its meetings in 1907, the Central Economic Board of the Sudan in fact pinpointed the currency situation as the main problem of Gambella trade. It recommended that the government, while theoretically under no obligation to supply MTD, continue to do so in view of the meagre capital of the merchants and as an inducement to transfrontier trade.⁵ But in March 1908, the acting mamur of Gambella was still complaining about the failure of both government and commercial houses in Khartoum to help their agents in Gambella in this respect.⁶ The governor himself, Colonel G. L. Matthews, after a visit to the post a few months later, emphasized "that the present lamentable conditions obtaining at Gambella are due greatly to the

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1. FO 141/393, encl. in Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05; app. VIII of same; also SIR 145, Aug 1906.
 2. CRO Intel 2/24/89, O'Sullivan to civ sec, 2.9.07.
 3. FO 141/409, Hadow to Matthews, 29.8.07.
 4. FO 371/9985, Walker to Campbell, 7.5.19.
 5. CEB, A.R., 1907.
 6. CRO Intel 2/24/190, letter to gov. UNP, 24.3.08.

impecuniosity of all our merchants."¹

No less a setback for Gambella in the early years was Minilik's determination to attract as much of the Ethiopian trade as possible to the capital, where, as the biggest banker and trader, he could dominate it. This was a policy he had pursued from the early 1880's. By the time Gambella was started, Gojam trade had been drawn to the capital at the expense of the traditional northern route and Harar's ascendancy in trade had begun to be eroded. By means of a network of nagadras throughout the country, Minilik had managed to establish control of the internal trade and to replenish his treasury.² Thus, though officially ready to assure the British of his cooperation in facilitating the growth of Gambella trade, he would not in actual fact tolerate the growth of a commercial centre in the west that could in any way challenge the pre-eminence of the capital.

Problems of the kind mentioned above, as well as the equally daunting ones of transport, communication and the ubiquitous kella (toll gates), which will be discussed below, were forcing some Sudan officials to doubt the wisdom of maintaining the trading post at all. Matthews probably had the least faith in the post. After his visit to the post in mid-1908, he recommended its closure and its replacement by a post on the Sobat on the Sudanese side of the boundary. Steamers, private or government, could then go up the Baro in

1. SIR 168, July 1908, app. D; also app.C.

2. Garretson, *passim*.; also SIR 168, July 1908, app.C.

the rainy season and collect the goods of merchants who preferred the Sudan route to the one via the capital. This would have the advantage of dissociating the Sudan government from the conduct of the Sudan merchants who had thitherto been able "to quote the flag at Gambella" to cover their abuses. Customs could be collected by each government independently, instead of the Sudan government collecting on behalf of both and then sharing them equally. Ras Tassamma, despite his earlier enthusiasm, was doing little to encourage trade, which was probably explicable by the fact that the Ethiopian share of customs dues from Gambella went to Minilik instead of to him and the merchants were not rich enough to give him the expensive presents that convention required.¹

Bramly, no doubt still smarting from the disappointing failure of his mission,² had an even more general reservation with regard to dealing with Ethiopians. "In spite of the fact that I consider Abyssinia one of the richest countries in the world as regards agricultural products and minerals," he concluded, "I would not personally invest a single sou in that country until the present form of Government is radically changed."³ A radical change of government is what Kelly also regarded as a precondition for the maximum possible exploitation of the rich resources of the country, although neither of them

1. SIR 168, July 1908, app. D; CRO Intel 2/24/191, Matthews to Amery, 11.1.09; Matthews to ADI, 1.7.09.

2. See above, pp. 113-5.

3. SIR 168, July 1908, app. C.

specified whether the change was to come through internal revolution or external, i.e. colonial, imposition. The general tenor of Kelly's recommendation, made after an extensive tour of western Ethiopia was, however, one of improvement rather than abandonment of the post. He saw it as the natural outlet of the areas west of 36°E long., a possibility made far from certain only by the numerous problems under which Gambella had to operate. Some of these problems were the numerous presents that merchants were required to give to local officials; the generally lukewarm attitude to trade of the same officials; and the limited period (four to five months) in which the post was accessible by water, which contributed to a poor level of capital turnover.¹ From the point of view of additional revenue, too, the post had little to commend it. One officer in fact claimed that the government was incurring an annual loss of £1500 to run it. The revenue from coffee, the chief Ethiopian product exported through Gambella and almost entirely consumed in the Sudan, was half of a 6% duty, in contrast to the 8% import duty that the government could levy on Brazilian coffee at Port Sudan. He therefore recommended either the closure of the trading post or an increase on the freight rates of up to 100%.²

British officials in the capital had a less sombre view of the situation. They were disappointed by the gloomy reports of Sudan officers, particularly those of Matthews,

1. FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09.

2. CRO Intel 2/24/194, Newcombe to dir. Sudan Railways, 26.1.11.

and pointed to the potential of Gambella as a centre for tapping all western Ethiopian trade. This had not been possible in the past largely because the full cooperation of Tassamma and Walda Giyorgis had not been secured. The Bank of Abyssinia, which claimed to enjoy the support of both, promised to establish a branch at Gore to alleviate the currency problem.¹ The British legation pressed Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis, by 1911 the most powerful man in Ethiopia,² to cooperate in brightening up the prospects of Gambella. In particular, the British sought approval to build bridges on some of the rivers between Gambella and the commercial centres on the plateau and the lifting of the embargo on rubber and ivory exports through Gambella. In view of Hayla Giyorgis' vested interest in both commodities passing through the capital, it was futile to expect an enthusiastic response from him. But the legation kept on assuring Khartoum that all was going well with regard to Gambella and blissfully projected a situation where the French railway, due to reach the capital in a few years' time, would find all the commercial produce it was intended to transport from western Ethiopia pass through Gambella.³

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1. FO 141/409, Goldie to Hohler, 3.12.08; Hohler to Grey, 12.12.08.
 2. Tassamma, who had been regent to the young successor-designate, Iyasu, died early in 1911. See Garretson, pp. 128-36, 322, for Hayla Giyorgis.
 3. FO 371/1042, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 6.5.11; FO 371/1043, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 27.6.11; DUR 300/1, Thesiger to Wingate, 3.12.10.

"a unity of It was not on economic grounds alone that the legation argued that the trading post should be kept. Political arguments were also adduced. Beside being the strongest asset to withstand French influence, which, if unchecked, was expected to grow after the completion of the railway, the Gambella post served as the centre from which British influence radiated in western Ethiopia. British presence in western Ethiopia was deemed necessary in readiness for the dismemberment of the country that was expected to attend Minilik's death. Closure of the post would undermine British prestige in the area, particularly among the Oromo and Watawit rulers whose friendship was vital in any British move to incorporate western Ethiopia. Khartoum should therefore think only in terms of making and demanding some reforms to improve the prospects of the post, such as the building of bridges, limiting the number of tolls, reducing portage rates, and inducing one or two "respectable" Khartoum firms to trade in Gambella which (in conjunction with the appointment of a British consul) would have the effect of "cleansing the commercial atmosphere." Raising the steamer transport rates could also force merchants to agitate for reforms.¹

The Foreign Office in London also attached considerable importance to Gambella trade.² The political significance of transfrontier trade, even more than its commercial one, had not apparently eluded Khartoum, either, as it hoped that

1. FO 371/1043, Thesiger to Wingate, 9.3.11.

2. FO 141/423, Cairo to Asser, 29.7.09.

"a unity of trade interests between the tribes inhabiting either side of the frontier may tend to establish harmonious relations between them."¹ The legation's optimism was also to some extent justified by the slow but steady growth of Gambella trade. From a total value of £E 17,120 in 1906, it had risen to £E 25,902 in 1909 and £E 43,874 in 1910. In 1911, when the total reached a value of £E 66,264, the customs receipts for the first time exceeded the expenses incurred by the Sudan government to maintain the post.² But it was not enough to dispel completely the lingering doubts of Khartoum about the post; they persisted, in one form or another, throughout the period.

Items of Trade

Of the Ethiopian products exported through Gambella, coffee undoubtedly topped the list. Western and southwestern Ethiopia were the home of what was known as Abyssinian or wild coffee, as distinct from the plantation coffee of Harar. Up to 70% of Sudan's coffee needs were supplied by Ethiopia. Of this the largest portion came through Gambella, with the exception of the earlier years when the Matamma route supplied an amount equal to that of Gambella.³ But as early as 1913, Gambella had begun to supply 65% of the coffee consumed in the

1. CEB, A.R., 1909.

2. FO 371/1293, Thesiger to Grey, 22.4.12; A & P, vol. 46 (1912-13) C.R., Gambella, 1911.

3. A & P, vol. 29 (1913), C.R., Abyssinia, 1911-12.

Sudan.¹ By the 20's and 30's, Gambella's position as the chief supplier of Ethiopian coffee to the Sudan was uncontested. In 1925, for example, of the £E 267,558 worth of coffee imported into the Sudan from Ethiopia, coffee to a value of £E 209,955 was exported via Gambella; the rest was shared almost equally by the Matamma-Gedaref route on the one hand and the Kurmuk-Roseires route on the other. Coffee moreover constituted almost the entire import item into the Sudan, while the two other routes supplied such additional products as cattle and tombac.² Other articles exported via Gambella, such as beeswax and rubber, passed in transit through the Sudan.

While almost all the coffee was consumed in the Sudan, some of it made its way to Egypt, as in 1912, when coffee to the value of £4,524 was exported in that direction.³ In the absence of plantations producing coffee of better grade, the trade in this commodity did not stretch any further, and British consuls often pinned their hopes on such a development for the expansion of the coffee trade.⁴ In 1927, when, owing to stagnancy in the Khartoum market, the principal Gambella

1. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913.

2. CEB, A.R., 1927-28, app. XVIA

3. A&P, vol. 29 (1913), C.R., Abyssinia, 1911-12. See CRO Civ Sec 64/4/31, Walker, 25.5.27, for later efforts to create more regular coffee trade to Egypt and other markets.

4. A&P, vol. 29 (1913), C.R., Abyssinia, 1911-12; A&P, vol. 46, (1912-13), C.R., Gambella, 1911; vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913.

merchants agreed not to ship more than 7,000 kantar each, the recurrent problem of capital lying idle was highlighted again. Some of the coffee was taken overland into the Sudan via Roseires by local traders, precipitating a further decline in its demand; some more got its way to the capital and thence to Jibouti. The merchants therefore considered making cleaning arrangements in Khartoum with the assistance of the Sudan government for export via Port Sudan to Egypt and other foreign markets. The government was expected to make a rebate on customs to cover the cost of cleaning, which would give Ethiopian coffee, naturally superior to its Brazilian rival, an additional advantage. Greater tonnage was in turn bound to benefit the Sudan steamers department. But the proposal did not materialize.¹

The exactions of local rulers were another equally serious impediment to the expansion of the coffee trade. This concerned chiefly the collection of the government royalty on coffee, which is believed to have varied from 10 to 75 per cent. Traditionally, the Oromo cultivators were made to pay the tax on the berries they had actually picked from the trees and were permitted to keep those fallen on the ground.² In 1914, Dajach Ganame, the governor of Gore, started collecting tax on the fallen berries. The Oromo population protested

1. FO 371/12346, Walker to Bentinck, 25.5.27; cf. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913.

2. A&P vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913.

by sending a delegation with a petition to the capital. Whether as a direct result of this step or not, Ganame gave up his odious imposition and the stranded coffee started appearing in Gambella, although the resultant rush precipitated a rise in portage charges.¹ In 1916, a similar delay in the collection of the royalty dragged the flow of coffee to the trading post. Meanwhile, some merchants managed to bribe the dajazmach into obtaining permission to buy secretly from the coffee owners and send it to Bure. Nagadras Astatqe himself, assigned to collect the taxes, used his position to buy large amounts in order to sell them later at a profit.²

This practice of holding up the coffee supply was continued by Ganame's successor, Dajach Kabada, with the same effect of corruption and smuggling.³ Kabada made a proclamation forbidding the sale of coffee before May. This left very little time to transport the coffee from the plateau to the trading post when the "open season" started in June. A petition - this time by merchants, with the full backing, if not at the instigation, of the British consul at Gore - was sent to Kabada, who was administering his province from the capital. The British legation in the capital also remonstrated to both Kabada and Ras Tafari, pointing out the injurious effect of the proclamation on trade.⁴ Neither petition nor remonstrations

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1. CRO Intel 2/25/200, Walker to Doughty-Wylie, 16.4.14, 23.4.14; FO 371/1881, encl. in Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 7.6.14; SIR 237 & 238, Apr & May 1914.
 2. FO 371/9985, Walker to Thesiger, 10.4.16.
 3. CRO Intel 1/13/63, Walker to Thesiger, 25.4.17; Walker to Campbell, 6.2.18.
 4. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Walker to Campbell, 6.2.18, 13.2.18; Campbell, 21.2.18.

produced any result. Equally fruitless, it appears, were the efforts of a group of Oromo delegates, who, in December 1919, went to the capital with presents of 2000 and 1000 dollars respectively to the empress and Ras Tafari and asked that they be allowed to sell their coffee in any month on payment of 25% tax to the government.¹

Beeswax was another item that passed through Gambella. But almost all of it went in transit through the Sudan to Europe. Figures are therefore not easy to come by as it is rarely mentioned in the statistics of Sudan trade with Ethiopia.² We have figures for 1913 and 1932, however, when beeswax to the value of nearly £E 19,000 and over £E 11,000 respectively was exported.³ Rubber, another important item in the transit trade, is treated at more length below. Trade in hides and skins, while an important sector of the Jibouti trade, was more fitful on the Gambella route. The preoccupation of the merchants with the more profitable coffee trade, as well as the fact that hides deteriorated by the storage that the seasonal nature of Gambella trade entailed, made the hides trade a not so attractive undertaking.⁴ In 1908,

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to Campbell, 26.9.19. In Sayo Birru had apparently agreed to collect royalty on coffee actually brought to the market, O.I. (Pythar~~as~~).
 2. A & P, vol 29(1913), C.R., Abyssinia, 1911-12; A & P, vol. 46 (1912-13) C.R., Gambella, 1911; A & P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913; CRO Intel 6/5/18, Matthews to civ. sec., 1.7.08.
 3. A & P, vol. 34(1914-16) C.R., Gambella, 1913; Secretary for Ec. Devt. & Statistics of foreign trade, A.R., 1932-33, app. XIIE.
 4. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Abyssinia, 1913.

quarantine restrictions stopped what little trade there was in this commodity.¹ When it was revived a few years later, it amounted to a value of only £E 170 in 1911, all of it exported by Majid Abud on behalf of John Nicholas & Co., and £E 550 in 1913.²

The problems connected with the export of ivory have been touched upon earlier.³ Briefly, they were a combination of the monopoly of the supply and trade in ivory by local governors, notably Jote and Tassamma, who deflected the trade to the capital, and the scruples of the Sudan government about trade in small and female ivory. Both governors purchased ivory from the local population at cheap prices and, after paying their tribute to the emperor, sold it at whatever price they liked. Tassamma had Timoleon as his agent and a person caught selling ivory to anyone but him would have his right hand cut off.⁴ Ras Walda Giyorgis, governor of Kaffa, similarly farmed his monopoly to an Indian firm.⁵ Five hundred to six hundred farasula⁶ of ivory were said to have been collected annually at the Gore market before payment of tribute. Maji, in Walda Giyorgis' province, supplied 800

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1. FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09.
 2. CRO Intel 1/13/57, Walker to civ sec, 12.12.11; A & P, vol. 46 (1912-13), C.R., Gambella, 1911; A & P vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913.
 3. See above, p.234f.
 4. SIR 126, Jan 1905, app.A; SIR 168, July 1908, app.C.
 5. FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09.
 6. 1 farasula = c.37lbs.

farasula annually.¹

Such restrictions gave rise to a lot of smuggling among Gambella merchants. The case of the mamur has already been referred to. A certain Eliadis, a one-time employee of the rubber company, was particularly notorious in this respect. He was once caught with ivory that he had smuggled into the enclave and it was confiscated.² A few months later, Nagadras Birru of Gore wrote to both the director of Intelligence at Khartoum and the governor of Upper Nile Province complaining about illicit purchases of ivory from Anyuua and Nuer by the same merchant.³ In 1911, Lif Kasa, then governor of the Anyuua country, accused a certain Dr. Strumer, a German residing in the enclave, of refusal to pay wages to some thirty-six Oromo in his service, of wounding an Anyuua, of maltreating his servants, and above all, of arming the Anyuua in exchange for ivory.⁴ More significant than the contraband trade in the enclave was the ivory and arms trade deep in Anyuua country and sometimes across the boundary, a profitable business which attracted Ethiopian governors as well as such dubious enterprises as the Baro syndicate. The steady supply of firearms to the Anyuua explains, more than anything else, the rise of such powerful leaders as Akwei and

1. A & P, vol. 29(1913), C.R., Abyssinia, 1911-12.

2. SIR 168, July 1908, app.D.

3. CRO Intel 2/24/191, Birru to DI, 23.12.08; Birru to Matthews, 7.12.08.

4. CRO Intel 1/13/57, Kasa to mamur Gambella, 21.5.11.

the longevity of Anyuaa resistance to both Ethiopian and Sudan administrative control.

In 1910, when the British authorities managed to persuade Timoleon to export some 600 farasula of ivory via Gambella, the Sudan government was caught between principle and profit. By law, no female ivory or male ivory of under 10 lbs. weight was to pass through Sudan territory. This had tended to discourage traders wishing at all to export through the Sudan, as they packed their ivory in bundles and not in parcels of male, female, and immature ivory.¹ What the British minister now requested was for the Sudan to forego these restrictions, if only temporarily. The ban on female and immature ivory, he argued, could only achieve the object of protecting female and small elephants in the Sudan, not in Ethiopia. It would on the other hand succeed in diverting the ivory trade from Gambella to Jibouti.² Wingate found the offer too "tantalizing" to reject altogether. But he was prevented from accepting it outright by legal scruples. He therefore asked Thesiger to obtain the agreement of the Foreign Office, in which case, he promised, "I am quite prepared to close my eyes from a Sudan point of view to this temporary breach of regulations especially as our refusal to comply with this request will inevitably end in throwing the whole of the Western Abyssinian transit ivory trade on to

1. A & P, vol. 29(1913) C.R., Abyssinia, 1911-12; Sudan Gazette, no.239, 19.6.13.

2. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Thesiger to Wingate, 15.7.10; Thesiger to Phipps, 16.8.10.

the Jibuti Railway."¹

A few months later, subsequent to an appeal from a wild life preservation society, the Sudan government raised the minimum weight of exportable male ivory to 20lbs.² In response to a letter from the British minister urging flexibility, Wingate reiterated that female and immature ivory was not to be accepted under any circumstances. He also stated that all ivory must be certified non-contraband.³ The latter condition was met - and years of British diplomatic struggle realized - in September 1911 when the Ethiopian government authorized the export of ivory through Gambella provided it had a pass from the Sayo or Bure customs and on payment of 18 dollars royalty per farasula.⁴ The grant, like many other things in this region was however soon caught in the web of the conflicting authorities of Sayo, then under Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis, and Gore, under Dajach Kabada. The situation was complicated by the rivalry for the monopoly of ivory trade in the latter's province between Timoleon, the veteran, and Majid Abud, the rising star.⁵ Not so much is heard of the ivory trade through Gambella thereafter, suggesting

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1. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Wingate to Clayton, 19.8.10; Wingate to Sadler, 9.8.10; Wingate to Thesiger, 18.8.10.
 2. CRO Intel 1/13/57, encl. in CO to FO, 25.2.11; Wingate to Gorst, 28.4.11; CEB minutes, no. 597, 15.4.11.
 3. CRO Intel 1/13/57, Wingate to Thesiger, 26.5.11.
 4. CRO Intel 1/13/57, Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 28.9.11; FO 371/1044, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 10.8.11.
 5. CRO Intel 1/13/58, Walker to civ sec, 27.2.12; O.I. (Majid).

that it continued to follow the known avenues of arms-dealing rather than the official channels of cargo manifests and customs receipts.

On the import side, liquor, like ivory among the export items, experienced a similar fate as the Sudan authorities swayed between legal scruple and commercial gain. In 1905, the Sudan government decided against granting licences for imports of liquor into Gambella. Only presents, whose value would be "enhanced by the prohibition of the General sale of liquors," by the governor or inspector of Upper Nile Province to Ethiopian frontier governors and officials were exempted.¹ The merchants had their eyes on the liquor trade from the beginning. In 1906, one of them wrote to the British minister in Addis Ababa urging a policy of laissez-faire in the import of drinks because, as he put it, "they are the only things, the same as public women, that can decide a man to establish himself anywhere; how do you expect people to go there when the only thing to be found is fever?"² In 1907, Gerolimato, one of the chief merchants, wrote to the Sudan authorities deploring the obstruction of the mamur who had refused the import of his fifteen cases of "assorted liquors", although Gerolimato had had permission from Wingate to take through about fifty cases every year for "Abyssinian merchants" and officials. He considered the act

1. CRO Intel 2/24/189, O'Sullivan to ADI, 22.8.05; Henry to agent general, Cairo, 28.8.05; cf. Sudan Gazette, no. 129, 29.3.08.

2. Quoted in FO 371/19189, memo on Gambella, 6.3.35.

very ungrateful in view of the pioneering role that he felt he had played in the opening up of Gambella trade at great cost, and he threatened to close his branches in western Ethiopia. A flurry of telegrams between Cairo, Khartoum, and Kodok (then capital of Upper Nile Province) followed and the mamur was instructed to let the liquor pass.¹ Gradually, the Sudan authorities relaxed the restriction, although the general rule remained that the liquor imported was to be for the use solely of the traders and their staff and as gifts to Ethiopian officials.²

Cotton goods constituted the most important item of import into Gambella, amounting to a value of £E15,029 out of a total of £E27,962 in 1911.³ They were invariably re-exported from, or passed in transit through, the Sudan. In 1925, they formed over 60% of re-exports from the Sudan to Gambella.⁴ In 1932, nearly 80% of the value of goods in transit to Gambella was in cotton piece-goods.⁵ Abujedić, the unbleached sheeting that was widely used throughout the country for making clothes and tents, was the principal item in this category. At the outset, Gambella got its supply

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1. CRO Intel 2/24/189, Bernard to Phipps, 20.11.07; Phipps to Bernard, 24.11.07.
 2. CRO Intel 2/25/199, acting GG to Thesiger, 3.9.13; Intel 1/19/97, ADI to leg sec, 18.4.18; leg sec to ADI, 20.4.18; Civ Sec 64/14/31, Marsh to civ sec, 29.8.24.
 3. A & P, vol. 46 (1912-13), C.R., Gambella, 1911.
 4. CEB, A.R., 1927-28, app. XVIC.
 5. Secretary for Ec. Devt. & Statistics of Foreign Trade, A.R., 1932-33, app. XIID.

mostly from America and Italy. Traders were said to have shown a preference for Italian over Manchester sheeting because of the credit of up to one year that they could obtain from Italian mills.¹ Later, the Japanese began to compete, rather successfully, Salt was the only significant Sudan product that was imported into Gambella. Until 1911, western Ethiopia got its supply of salt from Tigray via the capital. As the commodity was used as currency in the form of a bar (amole), the distance had an effect on the exchange rate: $2\frac{1}{2}$ bars to the dollar in a place like Gidami, in contrast to 5-6 in the capital. One Sudan government officer suggested then that European salt could be made into bafs and sold profitably in western Ethiopia.² Other goods that were either re-exported from or passed in transit through the Sudan included Maria Theresa dollars, metalware, empty sacks and soap.

Status and Condition of the Enclave

The enclave was an area of some 400 hectares on the right bank of the Baro. Though clearly demarcated by the river on the south and Khor Jajjaba to the east, its northern and western boundaries remained undemarcated for a long time, giving rise to disputes between officials of the two governments. The enclave was a distance of some 60 miles from the Ethio-

1. A & P, vol 46(1912-13), C.R., Gambella, 1911.

2. SIR 201, Apr. 1911, app.A.

Sudanese boundary. The two chief Sudan government officials were a British customs inspector and an Egyptian mamur until the Egyptian share in Gambella administration was terminated in 1914 when the mamur was dismissed and all powers given thereafter to the British inspector.

The climate was probably the most uninviting aspect of the enclave. Fever was rampant. The most to suffer were porters, who had to brave the marshy plains without adequate medical protection in the form of quinine, and pack animals in as much as they were used at all. A British traveller who was among the first to visit the post commented, with a mixture of admiration and disdain, that "even such people as Greeks, Armenians, Syrians and Egyptians are unable to live" in the enclave.¹ British officials in Gore and Gambella tended to play down the climatic hazards of the enclave.² But when Basha Wadare, the official in charge of telephone installation in the enclave died of fever after a brief stay in 1910, Walker expressed concern that the incident would increase "the evil reputation of Gambella for fever."³ His fears were not unfounded, for Gambella remained scarcely ever visited by any senior official of Gore, governor

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1. Landor, p. 218; cf. CRO Intel 1/14/62, report by Ratcliffe, inspector of Gambella, 29.3.20; cf. Bulpett, p.54.
 2. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to civ sec, 25.6.20; SMIR 324, July 1921, app. C; CRO Intel 1/14/63, Marsh (DC Gambella), 9.3.22.
 3. SIR 188, Mar 1910.

or nagadras.¹ "Gambeila," Walker wrote once, "is a strange and foreign country and ... no responsible Abyssinian official has any conception of the conditions prevailing there and where all are ignorant all are indifferent."² Nor does there seem to have been regular personal contacts between the respective British officials in Gore and Gambella. Consul Walker and District Commissioner Marsh met first in London in 1924, after the latter had already completed three years' service in Gambella.³

The juridical and political status of the enclave was itself a matter of debate. This was partly a result of the undemarcated northern and western boundaries of the enclave. More importantly, it was a question of the conflicting jurisdictions, legal and administrative, of the Ethiopian and Sudan authorities in the area. At the outset, the Sudan government was not quite sure as to the extent of the administrative and judicial powers it could exercise in the enclave. In 1908, the legal secretary could only write to the civil secretary about these powers with a great deal of equivocation. "On the whole," he said, "I am inclined to think that under the [1902] treaty the Sudan Government may exercise judicial and legislative jurisdiction so far as that may be necessary for the proper administration

1. SMIR 324, July 1921; O.I. (Pytharas)

2. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to Dodds, 30.10.19.

3. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Mac Michael, 4.11.24.

of the post as a commercial station."¹ In practice, the mamur had the powers of a magistrate, detaining and imposing fines on Sudan subjects, and confining Ethiopian offenders and then writing to Ethiopian governors for their removal.²

By 1912, it seems, the Sudan government position, at least as indicated by the conduct of the mamur, had passed from diffidence to over-confidence. This is gleaned from two letters by Lij Kasa, "the Ethiopian consul" (as he described himself) then in charge of the plains. Apparently, the mamur had earlier written to him requesting that he send over an offender to the enclave for trial. Kasa did not claim that the dispute in question took place outside the enclave, but challenged the mamur to prove that it did inside. He added that the controversy would not have arisen if Ras Tassamma were alive and asserted unequivocally that he would not hand over his judicial powers to someone else.³ Three months later he wrote another letter to the governor of Upper Nile Province accusing the mamur of damaging the good relations between the two governments. His chief complaint in this case seems to have been the arbitrary arrest of a person by the mamur. In conclusion, Kasa confided: "I like to assist you in everything, but if you send such a man our efforts will become fruitless, and this will disappoint me."⁴

1. CRO Intel 2/24/190, 1.3.08.

2. CRO Intel 2/24/190, Matthews to civ sec, 11.2.08.

3. CRO Intel 2/25/199, Kasa to mamur, 25.11.12.

4. CRO Intel 2/25/199, 2.3.13.

Kasa's complaints did not apparently pass unheeded. The mamur was removed in July 1914. Gambella thereafter came to be administered by the superintendent of customs.¹ The situation persisted until 1919 when the enclave was transferred from the customs department to the Upper Nile Province and began to be administered by a district commissioner.² But the actual transfer of administration was gradual and was not completed until September 1921.³

The boundaries of the enclave remained a subject of debate between officials of the two governments. Kasa, presumably approached by the mamur, had declined to engage in any demarcation work. He said he was not authorized to do such a thing and that, in any case, he saw no justification for it, as it was all Ethiopian territory.⁴ Particularly controversial was the conical hill on the northern side of the enclave. In 1915, a Sudan government engineer trying to pick rubble stone from the hill for the telegraph station then being constructed was stopped by Majid Abud, who claimed that the hill was outside the enclave.⁵ Majid had built a hut on top of the hill as a sign of Ethiopian possession. The issue arose again in 1922 in almost identical circumstances when

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1. CRO Intel 2/25/200, Walker to civ sec, 14.7.14.
 2. CRO Intel 1/14/62, civ sec to fin sec, 20.5.19.
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/63, Struvé to civ sec, 29.3.22; Intel 1/14/65, Marsh report, 4.10.22.
 4. CRO Intel 2/25/199, Kasa to mamur, 25.11.12.
 5. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Osborne to govr. UNP, 31.8.15.

Nagadras Zawga objected to the taking of stone from the hill without permission from the capital.¹

Walker, apparently undaunted by such challenges, was entertaining wider ambitions. He was arguing the necessity of incorporating the Ethiopian village on the other side of Khor Jajjaba on sanitary as well as economic grounds. The market which supplied the enclave with its food supplies was located in the Ethiopian village and was subject to the chronic rivalry between Sayo and Gore. In 1917, for example, Dajach Jote ordered his people not to take down food supplies to Gambella because of their being maltreated by Gore officials in control of the Ethiopian village. Over and above this economic argument, however, Walker adduced another which can only be described as scurrilous. He added: "It is also most objectionable to have this Abyssinian village a few yards away from the bounds of the Enclave. It is full of malarial subjects and insanitary." The aim should therefore be "to isolate the Abyssinians and avoid a native village a few yards from our own ground."² No wonder a contributor to Birhanina Salam, after describing the obstruction from Sudan authorities faced by Ethiopian merchants wishing to trade via Gambella, concluded his article by asking how an Ethiopian could possibly be barred from entering a piece of territory that lay in his own country.³

1. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Dodds, 7.12.22.

2. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Walker to Thesiger, 23.5.17; cf. FO 371/9985, Walker to Thesiger, 25.10.17.

3. B.S., 2.9.26.

What came to be contemplated in Sudan government circles was not the incorporation of the Ethiopian village into the enclave, but an altogether radical proposition of transferring the site of the enclave further downstream to Pokum. The idea was to get more money in freights by extending the "open season" when the Baro would be navigable. The proposal was elaborately rejected by both Walker and the acting director of Intelligence in Khartoum. According to the latter, apart from the fact that the power of selecting the site for the enclave had already been exercised when Itang and then Gambella were chosen, Pokum would be further from Bure, the centre of the coffee trade. The transfer would also involve abandoning the wireless station installed at Gambella as well as dislocating both the branch of the Bank of Abyssinia and the Ethiopian customs house already established there.¹ Walker had earlier suggested the possibility of moving the site some ten miles further upstream, provided Ethiopian government co-operation was forthcoming.² He now argued that moving the enclave further downstream would mean the ruin of trade, as porters could only be available at prohibitive prices.³ It was therefore thought inadvisable to change the site of the enclave. It was rather decided to improve the existing establishment by making sanitary arrangements, erecting a crane, building a quay, and providing a launch for postal service as the carrier service thitherto

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/62, ADI to civ sec. 13.2.20.
 2. FO 371/9985, Walker to Thesiger, 25.10.17.
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to civ sec, 25.6.201 cf. Pollen to govr. UNP, Oct. 1920.

run by the Anyuua was often disrupted by warfare with the Nuer. A sum of £5,000 was allocated for the purpose.¹ Walker, in objecting to the transfer of the site, had also argued that improvement of the enclave should await its demarcation and that the Ethiopian government should share in the cost of any such undertaking, as it was likely to demand eventually to take over the customs administration.² His stipulations notwithstanding, the scheme was approved at the beginning of 1921.³

Sayo-Gore rivalry

Sayo and Gore were the two provinces between whose conflicting jurisdiction Gambella found itself. The former was administered by Dajach Jote at the beginning of the period under study and the latter by Ras Tassamma. The contest between the two centres of Ethiopian authority to gain control of Gambella and the lucrative fees and dues that accrued from it was an important theme in the history of the trading post. It was, as we have seen, an impediment to a co-ordinated drive by Ethiopian authorities to exert administrative control over the Anyuua.⁴ The dispute also jeopardized the enclave's food supplies, which came mostly from Sayo and

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Pollen to govr. UNP, Oct 1920.
 2. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to civ. sec, 25.6.20.
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/62, civ sec to priv sec, 27.12.20.
 4. See above, p. 134.

fluctuated with the ups and downs of Sayo's fortune in the perennial debate over Gambella. With Jote and Tassamma as the protagonists, the dispute had the character of a duel between an Oromo prince and an Amhara governor. When the legacy of struggle was kept up by the Amhara governors who succeeded both, the predominantly economic motif of the dispute becomes obvious.

Theoretically, Jote's province had come under Tassamma's overall jurisdiction by 1905.¹ In practice, Jote was independent in almost all respects. The more direct control that Tassamma had managed to secure at one stage was rescinded by the lavish gifts of gold and slaves that Jote gave to emperor and empress.² That the enclave was situated on the northern bank of the Baro, which came under Jote's sphere, was to his advantage and his authority in Gambella apparently had imperial endorsement.³ In 1905, Tassamma's people could not march on the right bank of the Baro because it was under Jote.⁴ Minilik's redoubtable general also felt slighted when a merchant like Ydlibi bypassed him to pay respects and give presents to Jote. Tassamma sent soldiers to arrest the Syrian merchant but recalled them on reflection, fearing trouble with Jote and in deference to

1. SIR 126, Jan 1905, app.A.

2. FO 141/393, encl. in Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05; O.I. (Taye)

3. Bahru, p. 48.

4. SIR 126, Jan 1905, app. A.

the Sudan government, under whose auspices the merchant had come.¹

Official Sudan government policy was more inclined towards Tassamma, although this did not rule out some "coquetting with Jote."² It did not in any case extend to complying with Tassamma's request that the site of the enclave be transferred to the south bank of the river, a request no doubt inspired by his wish to secure the control over the trading post that he could not obtain otherwise. The site already chosen was deemed to be the best from the point of view of trade, communication, health and navigational convenience.³ By 1907, Tassamma had acquiesced in Jote's authority as the custodian of Ethiopian interests in Gambella. He could levy, however, a 10% tax on exports from his province plus some additional fees.⁴ But Jote's ascendancy was short-lived. In 1908, he was summoned to Addis Ababa on charges ranging from establishing surreptitious links with the British to the bloody suppression of an uprising in Anfillo. He was imprisoned. With the declining health of the Emperor and the appointment of Tassamma as councillor to the heir-designate, Iyasu, Tassamma's political star in the capital was rising. On 5th August of the same year, his position was further strengthened when the ailing monarch, in an effort to check the machinations of his ambitious wife,

1. FO 141/393, encl. in Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. See, however, Landor, p. 216, and FO 371/1044, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 10.8.11.

4. CRO Intel 2/24/189, O'Sullivan to civ sec, 2.9.07.

Taytu, made Tassamma ras bitwada (most favoured ras).¹

Correspondingly, Gambella came more and more under the political orbit of Gore. But the issue was far from settled. Tassamma died in April, 1911. Back in his province from detention in 1912, Jote revived his claims and started a period of inconclusive confrontation with Dajach Kabada, Tassamma's son and successor in Gore.²

In this context, Iyasu's scheme of a separate governor of the Anyuaa plains directly responsible to himself could be viewed as a stroke of administrative genius. Independent of both Sayo and Gore, Ydlibi, Iyasu's choice for the new post, made his presence felt by instituting new taxes and road fees and drawing elaborate measures to disarm and administer the Anyuaa.³ In an interesting and detailed set of instructions that he sent to his representative probably early in 1915, he defined the country under his jurisdiction as stretching from the bottom of the escarpment to the Sudan frontier and authorized him to build three stations, two of them on the slopes of Sayo and Anfillo to the north of the Baro river. His headquarters, which were to fly the Ethiopian flag, were to be on the southern side facing the Gambella customs station. Ganame, Kabada's successor in Gore, and Jote, among other governors, were requested to give formal permits to hunting parties from their provinces and Ydlibi's

Life and Times

1. Marcus, pp. 235, 239-40.
2. FO 371/1571, Walker to Thesiger, 21.4.13.
3. FO 371/2227, Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 23.1.15; FO 371/2228, encl. in Walker to Grey, 5.2.15.

representative was to keep the permits as guarantee of their good conduct.¹ In brief, Ydlibi was trying to spell clearly his authority in the region vis-à-vis Sayo and Gore on the one hand and the Sudan government on the other. Jote and Ganame could not stomach the impertinence. Their ancestral differences they did swallow temporarily and worked together to contribute for the dismissal of Ydlibi's agent, Majid Abud, in 1916.²

Ganame himself soon fell into disgrace and was replaced by the man whom he himself had succeeded earlier, Kabada. It appears that Ganame had been more than lukewarm in responding to the call from the capital to join the Shawan force that defeated Nigus Mikael of Wallo, Iyasu's father, at the battle of Sagale on 22nd October 1916, following Iyasu's deposition about a month earlier. Ganame is in fact said to have started a belated march to the capital while the Shawan forces were returning from Sagale. He was taken prisoner en route.³ He was later tried for association with the deposed emperor and condemned to death, but the sentence was not carried out.⁴ The transfer of authority from Ganame to Kabada epitomized the chaos and confusion that

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1. FO 371/2228, encl. in Walker to Grey, 5.2.15. The identity of the representative, addressed as Ato Gabriel, remains a mystery. The only known representative of Ydlibi in the area was Majid Abud.
 2. See above, p.144.
 3. O.I. (Walda Samayat)
 4. FO 371/4394, 20.5.20.

such changes usually entailed in the provinces at the time. Although formally appointed in December 1916, Kabada took a fairly long time to assume his post. The interval was marked by rancour and fighting between the soldiers and officers of Kabada, led by Qañazmach Gran, on the one hand and the departing followers of Ganame on the other. The unpaid soldiers also resorted to brigandage. Trade and agriculture suffered in the process.¹

Once in Gore, Kabada resumed his old battle with Sayo for the control of Gambella. This time, however, his adversary was not Jote, who was stripped of his powers in July 1917 and died a year later.² It was Dajach Birru, the first Amhara governor to the area. Gambella then was controlled by Fitawrari Fanta in Kabada's name. Birru's first act was to impose sanctions on the food supplies from Sayo to Gambella.³ In March 1918, Birru sent down men to claim possession of Gambella. Kabada's moderation averted an armed confrontation.⁴ Less than two months later, forces of the two governors came close to an armed clash when Birru's representative, Fitawarari Tucho, went down to Gambella and the surrounding areas with over 300 armed men and collected

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1. FO 371/9985, Walker to Thesiger, 14.2.17; 28.2.17, 21.3.17; cf. FO 371/15389, A.A.I.R., Oct. Dec. 1930; CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to Ch.d'aff, AA, 26.9.19.
 2. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Walker to civ sec, 9.7.17; Birru to Zawditu & Tafari, 25.8.18.
 3. CRO Intel 1/13/61, private letter from Gambella to ADI, 5.11.17; Gibson to dir. of Customs, Khartoum, 16.5.18; ADI to civ sec, 13.2.20.
 4. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Walker to Thesiger, 27.3.18.

tribute from the Anyuua. Again Fanta was too cautious - or fearful - to opt for a showdown.¹ The whole problem was compounded when Fitawrari Burayu, whose district itself was a bone of contention between Sayo and Gore, put a claim for Gambella.²

Meanwhile, the food sanction was biting on the enclave, both directly and indirectly through the shortage of labour supply that it caused. In view of this dependence of Gambella on Sayo as well as the fact that Sayo was establishing itself as a commercial rival to Bure, Walker did not conceal his preference for Sayo control of Gambella.³ The more lasting solution that he envisaged, however, was an Ethiopian administration of Gambella independent of both contending provinces. That he could look back with nostalgia to the times of Ydlibi, for whom, like most other British officials, he previously had only vituperation, is a measure of his exasperation.⁴ What the consul was contemplating out of necessity, the inspector of Gambella came to effect with a zest which embarrassed Sudan government authorities. After two visits to Birru in the summer of 1919, he returned with a rather flattering appraisal of the governor who was by no

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1. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Gibson to dir. of customs, 16.5.18; Walker to Thesiger, 1.5.18.
 2. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Walker to Campbell, 20.2.18; Walker to Thesiger, 10.4.18. Walker commented on Burayu's claims: "it is possible that he has as much right as any, though it is unlikely to be recognised."
 3. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Walker to Campbell, 6.2.18.
 4. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Walker to Thesiger, 1.5.18, 15.5.18.

means described in the best of terms by others. He expressed confidence that given time he would make the governor "a firm friend of the Sudan." He also recommended that, in accordance with Birru's wish, he make his residence in Sayo.¹ The inspector's visit was deemed both imprudent and dangerous as it could give rise to the suspicion that the Sudan officials were intriguing with Birru over Gambella while it was officially under Gore. The inspector was therefore instructed not to venture on any further visit to an Ethiopian governor without referring to the consul.²

The tug-of-war persisted. In the summer of 1920 Dajach Nadaw (later Ras) succeeded Kabada, who had died on 14th June.³ The only thing that changed was the allegiance of Fanta, whose fate, like that of Majid, seemed to have been intertwined with Gambella and the Anyuaa. He now served as Birru's lieutenant. In October 1922, Nagadras Zawga, Nadaw's representative, was forced to seek refuge in the enclave under pressure from Fanta. Both governors pleaded their cases to Tafari in the capital.⁴ But no definitive settlement of the problem was made, if at all it was ever attempted. The food embargo on Gambella was renewed in 1929 by Dajach Makonnin, Birru's successor in Sayo. Despite subsequent orders from

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Ratcliffe to civ sec, 2.10.19.
 2. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to civ sec, 20.9.19; civ sec to Ratcliffe, 23.11.19.
 3. Mars'e Hazan, Zawdita, p. 187.
 4. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Dodds, 25.10.22; 19.11.22; Walker to Russell, 11.5.23.

the capital to lift the embargo, the situation in Gambella did not improve to any appreciable degree.¹ The first major attempt to solve the long-standing problem of rivalry over Gambella came in 1934 when Majid Abud was appointed frontier agent over both banks of the Baro. Even then, as we have seen, the chronic situation lingered on, the dual contest sometimes even assuming a triangular character with the participation of the customs officials in Gambella.

Traders

Ethiopia's import-export trade was generally dominated by foreigners. The activities of Ethiopian merchants, Muslim or non-Muslim, was largely limited to internal trade. More than any other preceding Ethiopian monarch, too, Minilik made use of the services of expatriates and sponsored their commercial ventures. The most famous case of a foreigner in the emperor's service was probably that of the Swiss Ilg, his counsellor. Adventurers like Leontieff and Babicheff, both Russians, played active roles in Minilik's expansionist drive to the southwest.² On a more strictly commercial plane, Indian traders, with capital loans from Minilik, had by 1900 managed to push the French from the position of pre-dominance that they had held in Ethiopia's external trade. Their lower overhead costs and living expenses gave them an

1. FO 371/13838, Dunbar to Hiruy, 4.4.29; Hiruy to Dunbar, 16.4.29; Dunbar to Chamberlain, 29.4.29; SMR 3, 1929, DUR 104/17 Winder report, 1936.

2. Marcus, Life and Times, pp. 188f; Pankhurst, p.61.

additional edge over their European competitors. Other expatriates who similarly played a prominent role in the economic life of the capital and other towns were Syrians (in the generic sense in which the term was used at the time), Armenians and Greeks. The last mentioned, who were mostly artisans, swelled considerably in numbers between 1904 and 1907.¹

In western Ethiopia, Indians and Armenians had a less conspicuous position. The Greeks and Syrians were more important. Ethiopian traders became prominent only in the post-Italian period.² The Greeks tended to come in a spirit of adventure, without any capital, but gradually started business of one kind or another. Some Greeks who came to collect rubber for Ydlibi in 1904 eventually embarked on coffee trade.³ Other Greeks had a more auspicious beginning. Gerolimato, who also had the position of British vice-consul in Harar, was given a great deal of official favour. After a report on Ras Tassamma's province compiled by Timoleon at Gerolimato's expense, Sudan government circles, with prodding from Harrington, the British minister in Addis Ababa, were thinking in terms of leasing part of the enclave to him and even giving him a monopoly on Gambella trade for a start.⁴ Gerolimato obtained neither the lease nor the monopoly. But

1. Garretson, pp. 165, 274; Pankhurst, pp. 398-99.

2. Birhanu, p.63.

3. O.I. (Pytharas); SIR 168, July 1908, app.D.

4. CRO Intel 2/24/188, Harrington to Wingate, July 1902; Talbot, 27.7.02. See also above, p. 252-3.

his firm, under the management of Timoleon, grew to be one of the two most important trading houses in the area. It had agents in Bure, Gore and Gambella, in addition to offices in Harar and Addis Ababa.¹ In 1905, the firm had a capital of ££10,000. By 1912, this had grown to ££100,000.² In April 1913, Gerolimato was elected to the executive committee of the Sudan Chamber of Commerce, along with Gellatly Hankey & Co., later to play an important role in western Ethiopian trade, and the Kordofan Trading Company, who had by then departed from the western Ethiopian scene.³ Timoleon was so successful in ingratiating himself with Ethiopian officials in Gore that Walker, who resented the undermining of his own influence that this involved, bewailed "the lack of independence of the local authorities and how easily they can be influenced by a capitalist in his own interests."⁴

Gerolimato's rival in western Ethiopia were John Nicholas & Co., whose general agent was Majid Abud. In 1912, the firm had a capital of about ££100,000. Like its rival, it was very much a family business, four of its proprietors being brothers-in-law of Ydlibi, who himself was the guiding spirit behind the whole enterprise.⁵ Another trading concern,

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1. FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09; CRO Intel 2/25/199, Yahia to Symes, Nov 1912.
 2. CRO Intel 2/25/199, Yahia to Symes, Nov. 1912.
 3. Sudan Herald, R.4.13.
 4. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Walker to Thesiger, 3.9.17.
 5. CRO Intel 2/25/199, Yahia to Symes, Nov 1912; Intel 1/13/61, Hulbett to Ast. DI, 4.6.17.

the Kordofan Trading Company, had a brief career and its fate is examined in greater detail below in connection with the rubber trade. Among the pioneer traders in Sayo and Gambella was Angelo Capato, a Greek, whose name is still vivid in the memory of the people of Sayo (now known as Dambi Dollo). He had agents at Sayo, Gore, Bure and Gidami.¹ By 1914, however, his entire business had run into serious difficulties and sympathizers were expressing anxiety about his being thrown "penniless out in the street."² His agent, Cacourato, eventually began trading in his own right. In 1912, he was thought to have a capital of ££10,000.³ Latecomers to the scene but equally significant were Seferian & Co and Messrs. J. & S. Tabet. The latter were described by one observer as having, "with intensely serious faces, turned the drama of trade into light comedy. Their commercial contortions remind one of the reference to the mountain being delivered of a mouse."⁴

The rivalry between Majid Abud and Timoleon was said to have attained such vindictive proportions in 1912 that the price of coffee doubled and that of wax was up by over 30%.⁵ Their animosity might have been exacerbated by their

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1. SIR 126, Jan 1905, app. A; Landor, p. 220; FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09.
 2. Sudan Herald, 3.1.14; O.I. (Pytharas); see also DUR 469/9, Wingate to Clayton, 14.4.15.
 3. CRO Intel 2/25/199, Yahia to Symes, Nov 1912.
 4. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Hulbert to Ast. DI, 4.6.17.
 5. CRO Intel 1/13/58, Walker to civ sec, 27.2.12.

differing national origins: one was a Syrian, the other a Greek. But one Greek informant claimed that the Greeks themselves competed more than they co-operated - a fact which he explained by reference to Greek individualism.¹ The prevailing picture, however, was one of secret agreements between the merchants at the expense both of Ethiopian sellers of such exportable commodities as coffee and of newcomers to the commercial scene, particularly European traders. One Ethiopian writer graphically described the manner in which Greek traders in Sayo conspired to depress the price of coffee and to inflate that of salt and abujedid and the pathetic plight of the Ethiopian seller who trekked from one purchaser to another in vain search of a fair price for his commodity.² A British journal indicated that a number of foreign firms not only placed the Ethiopians "in a helpless position to secure the best returns for their native products" but also had "an understanding that no intruders will be welcome and any new firms contemplating this field must be prepared to contest every point with competitors who employ methods and means that might be questionable from the standpoint of the best business ethics."³

Such scoffing at the commercial standards of the Greek, Syrian, Armenian, and Indian merchants who dominated Ethiopia's foreign trade at this time was quite common among

1. O.I. (Pytharas).

2. B.S., 26.5.32; O.I. (Makurya)

3. The Near East, 13.8.15; cf. Globus, v. 94 (1908), 292.

British businessmen. C.F. Rey, writer of many books and articles on Ethiopia and one-time manager of the Abyssinian Corporation, whose exit from the Ethiopian commercial scene followed fast on the heels of its debut, described them as "the most unfortunate representatives of the white race which it would be possible to imagine from the point of view of impressing the native mind." He deplored their "code of morals and a standard of living which is no higher than that of the natives" and was greatly worried that "the Abyssinian proletariat who rub shoulders with these folk, and do not come so much into contact with the fewer decent and more recently arrived Europeans, lump all Westerners together and judge them all from those they know, thus producing a misleading and disastrous idea of European standards and mentality."¹

It was precisely this adaptability of the Greek and Syrian merchants, their capacity to operate in an Ethiopian milieu with amazing dexterity, that ensured success for their businesses. They mixed with the indigenous population, spoke their languages, and actively participated in such communal enterprises as school and road building. One such occasion is reported in Birhanina Salam when Gore traders like Majid and Salim Tabet, beside making generous contributions towards the cost of building a school, discoursed at length on the values of education and extolled the governor, Ras

1. In the Country of the Blue Nile (London, 1927), pp. 212-13.

Nadaw. Said Salim Tabet: "It is not only Ethiopians who appreciate and rejoice at the building of this school; it is also those of use who are Ethiopians in character and sentiment, though not by birth."¹

Gondari settlers preferred Greek traders to the bank when it came to depositing their money.² The traders' hold over provincial governors was sometimes overpowering. One Greek trader in Sayo, Paulos K. Beriuniwos, had ingratiated himself with Dajach Birru so much that he had exempted himself from the jurisdiction of Nagadras Bashah, who was normally responsible for adjudicating on cases involving traders, and was answerable only to the dajazmach. In response to an article by the trader accusing the nagadras of dilatoriness in the execution of his administrative duties, the latter wrote a long, well-reasoned and well-documented essay on the offences of the trader under the governor's personal protection, and the latter's interference in legal and administrative spheres which strictly belonged to the nagadras while neglecting his own prescribed task of maintaining order and guaranteeing security in the province as a whole.³ The dispute between nagadras and governor, between rational administration and personal patronage, is probably of much more enduring interest than the mutual recriminations of nagadras and trader.

1. B.S., 12.10.27.

2. O.I. (Mangiste).

3. B.S., 20.5.26; cf. O.I. (Pytharas, whose father was said to have been made fitawrari by Ras Damiss).

Egypt, The Greek traders also distinguished themselves in card-playing. In 1926, there were reported to be twenty-four professional gamblers in Sayo, which had the largest concentration of Greeks in western Ethiopia.¹ In 1924, Cacourato, the pioneer of Gambella trade, was chained in Sayo for debts of up to 12,00 MTD. He had squandered the money in drinking and gambling.² Distilling spirits locally was another Greek speciality.³ A Greek bricklayer in Sayo was even alleged to have tried his hand at sorcery.⁴ Walker was so exasperated by the activities of the Greeks that he contemplated ceasing the unofficial protection that he as British consul was extending to Hellenic subjects. He argued that "if the Greeks take advantage of the lawless state of Abyssinia, the only course is to treat them as natives and class them as such."⁵

Currency

The problem of the shortage of dollars in Gambella trade has already been touched on. It continued to be a serious handicap throughout most of the period. The Bank of Abyssinia, a British-dominated subsidiary of the Bank of

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1. Aimiro, 4.9.26; O.I. (Pytharas).
 2. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Bullock, 21.5.24.
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to Dodds, 17.10.20.
 4. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to Dodds, 28.9.20.
 5. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Russell, 30.4.24; cf. Walker to Bullock, 21.5.24.

In 1917, when the scarcity of the MTD caused a rise in the exchange value of the dollar in relation to the pound, the credit situation was so bad for foreign traders that both Thesiger and the governor of the Bank of Abyssinia had to appeal to Khartoum to make available any stock of dollars that it could spare without any luck.³ Hoarding and re-export of the silver currency, which was minted in Austria, to such places as India for the manufacture of silverware, also contributed to the disappearance of the dollar from the

1. A & P, vo. 29(1913), C.R., Abyssinia, 1911-12; A &P, vol 46 (1912-13), C.R., Gambella, 1911.
2. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Dodds, 10.10.23; Walker to Russell, 12.3.24.; Intel 1/13/61, Walker to Thesiger, 18.4.17, 6.8.17.
3. CRO Intel 1/13/61, Collier to president, Bank of Abyssinia (Cairo), 18.10.17; Thesiger to Stack, 20.10.17; Stack to Thesiger, 9.7.18.

market.¹ The government tried to gain some control of the situation by prohibiting all re-export of dollars. But they continued to be smuggled out in sacks of grain "even under the coal in locomotive tenders of the railroad."² A government ban on the passage of dollars from Bure to Gambella for fear of export to the Sudan restricted trade, although merchants could partly satisfy their dollar needs through the Sayo route, which was not affected by the embargo.³

Scarcity was not the only problem associated with the MTD. Its bulk and the fluctuations of its value were additional inconveniences. Coffee merchants are said to have needed as many as thirty mules to carry their dollars.⁴ The value of both the MTD and the Minilik dollar fluctuated with that of silver in the international market. Thus, the increase in world silver production at the beginning of the century resulted in a decline in the value of the dollar. During the war years, on the other hand, under the combined effect of lower silver production, cutting of supplies from Austria and hoarding in Ethiopia, there was a steep rise in the value of the dollar.⁵ From a value of 11 dollars to the

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/65, Marsh report, 4.12.23.
 2. Henderson, p. 116.
 3. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to Dodds, 18.12.19; cf. Intel 1/14/63, acting fin sec to govrs. of Kassala, Funj, Upper Nile and Mongalla provinces and dir. of Customs, 12.9.21.
 4. Pankhurst, p. 473; Michel, p. 472.
 5. Pankhurst, p. 486; The Near East, 13.8.15; US 884.515/1, Southard memo, 28.11.29.

pound sterling in August 1914, the bank exchange rate had risen to 5 dollars to the pound by October 1919.¹ In the early 30's the dollar again suffered a decline in value.² A further handicap of the MTD was the fact that it did not have any smaller change. Retail trade thus had to depend largely on such mediums of exchange as salt bars (amole, otherwise known as baghe in western Ethiopia), cartridges, and beads.³ The Minilik dollar, which first appeared in 1894, had an advantage over the MTD in this respect, since it had smaller change, ranging from the alad (half a dollar) to the besa (one thirty-second of a dollar). But they were so scarce that they acquired an inflated value and became items of much speculation.⁴ The circulation of the dollar itself was confined to the bigger towns like Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.⁵ In the Bela Shangul region, Egyptian money was said to have been more readily acceptable than the Minilik dollar in the first decade of the century.⁶ Egyptian money was also accepted in Bure.⁷ By 1923, the

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1. FO 371/3500, Harar consulate to Dodds, 1.10.19; cf. Naval Staff, Intelligence Division, A Handbook of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (1922), p. 306.
 2. B.S., 11.9.30, 11.2.32; cf. C.F. Rey, Unconquered Abyssinia (London, 1923), pp. 209-10.
 3. Pankhurst, pp. 464ff; Gleichen, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p.120; The Near East, 13.8.13, Montandon, Ghimirra, p. 349. A dollar was valued at 4 to 6 amole and 7 to 12 cartridges in western Ethiopia, according to Michel, p. 472; but see above, p.
 4. Pankhurst, pp. 484ff; Gabra Hiywat, pp. 152-55; B.S., 12.3.25, 16.4.25, 29.7.26; The Near East, 13.8.15; Mars'e Hazan, Zawditu, p. 406,
 5. Pankhurst, pp. 481, 484f.
 6. Gleichen, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 120.
 7. DUR 114/1, Sudan Almanac, 1915.

situation had changed somewhat and merchants were paying the Ethiopian customs at Gambella in Minilik dollars and the district commissioner could even predict confidently that "It should not be many years now before the Menelik dollar is universally accepted without quibble."¹ But the MTD continued to enjoy unchallenged supremacy throughout the period. The Minilik dollar failed to dislodge it from the high pedestal of universal acceptability bordering on superstitious reverence that it had come to acquire through the centuries.²

Customs

In essence, the customs duties collected from incoming and outgoing goods at Gambella constituted the most obvious value of the post as far as both governments were concerned. But the trade had additional attraction for officials on both sides: the steamer transport fees for the Sudan and the additional dues collected at the numerous toll gates (kella) for the Ethiopian. The customs were collected by the Sudan government and then shared equally between the two governments. There does not seem to have been any written agreement providing for such a procedure, and the practice was to be a subject of growing controversy in the 20's until the Sudan government was forced to cease collecting the customs on behalf

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/65, Marsh report, 4.12.22.
 2. Pankhurst, p. 493f cf. Marcel-Maurice Fischel, Le Thaler de Marie Thérèse (Paris, 1912), pp. xxix-xxx, 155; Sudan Handbook, p.305.

of its Ethiopian counterpart.¹

The rates of duty were 6% for bona fide Sudan or Ethiopian produce, 5% being import duty and 1% export. Goods entering Ethiopia in transit through the Sudan paid 8% at Port Sudan and were not charged again. Goods re-exported from the Sudan were liable to a total of 16% - 8% import duty into the Sudan and another 8% into Ethiopia. - unless they were re-exported from the Sudan within six months of the original importation, in which case a rebate of 7% of the Sudan duties was granted, reducing it to a total of 9%.²

On the basis of the above valuation, the Ethiopian government got an annual revenue ranging from £E696 in 1908 to an average of about £E7000 in the 20's.³ But nothing seems to have been paid before 1917 and the entire sum was rarely paid. Deductions were made for such costs as the ones incurred by Walker in his endless road-clearing enterprises.⁴ In 1913, for example, Thesiger requested that a sum of 41 dollars be deducted from the Ethiopian share and be given to Walker as compensation for four Anyuaa huts in the enclave that Gore soldiers had burnt as they were passing through. This was in addition to the 11,500 dollars that were

1. CRO Civ sec 13/1/4, note, 26.1.22.
2. A & P, vol. 46 (1912-13), C.R., Gambella, 1911; A & P, vol. 29 (1913), C.R., Abyssinia, 1911-12. The former mentions a duty only of 8% for goods re-exported from the Sudan. But the 9% figure - 1% being export duty from the Sudan - gets further corroboration from FO 371/11575, Schuster to Murray, 5.10.26, and Lander, p.218.
3. Correspondence in CRO Civ Sec 13/1/4 and 13/2/5; SIR 177, Apr. 1909.
4. CRO Civ Sec 13/1/4, Stack to Thesiger, 5.4.17; fin sec to priv sec, 27.1.19.

to be deducted for the cost of building bridges between Gambella and the plateau. 22,989 dollars remained after the deductions.¹

Nor does annual balancing of the accounts seem to have started until after 1918.² The revenue from Gambella trade was relatively high as compared to that from Kurmuk trade which rarely exceeded the £E 300 mark. Matamma trade ranked second but, unlike the revenue from Gambella and Kurmuk, that of Matamma as well as Roseires went straight into the pocket of the local governor: Nigus Walda Giyorgis until 1918 and Ras Gugsa after the former's death. In 1918, Ras Tafari requested that the Ethiopian share of customs from Matamma be paid direct to the central government in the future instead of to Walda Giyorgis's successor, Gugsa. But, following indications from the British legation that such a move would infuriate Gugsa into raising his own taxes and obstructing traders, Tafari gave up the idea.³ Gugsa forfeited the Roseires customs, however, which started being paid to Dajach Ayalew, governor of the frontier districts of Gojam and Bagemdir.⁴

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1. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to acting GG, 3.9.13.
 2. Thus, we have a lump sum of £E9126 for the years 1907 to 1916, CRO Civ Sec 13/1/4, Stack to Thesiger, 5.4.17; Thesiger to Stack, 2.5.17.
 3. CRO Civ Sec 13/1/4, Thesiger to Stack, 2.5.17, 14.5.18.
 4. CRO Civ Sec 13/1/4, Sudan treasury to gov. Kassala, 15.10.22; Stack to Russell, 22.10.22.

In addition to these regular duties, there were a number of arbitrary dues imposed by local rulers which inhibited the growth of trade. This was a reflection both of the diffuse nature of central authority and of a system of administration which paid no salaries to its officials but rather left them to fend for themselves as best as they could. One report described the power of local officials in this respect as autocratic and attributed the almost total destruction of the route from Naqamte to Sayo to the incidence of such tolls.¹ Another report claimed that by the time goods from Gambella reached the interior past the numerous kella, their price had risen to a level 30% higher than their value at the capital, thereby further undermining the capacity of Gambella to compete with the established route from the east.² The proliferation of kella and its injurious effect on trade was also a subject of growing concern among progressive Ethiopians of the time.³ Sudan merchants trading at Gambella also complained about the incidence of kella.⁴ Minilik, while sympathetic to their problems, asked for patience in doing away with practices which had existed "from time immemorial."⁵

1. A & P, vol 34(1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913. The exactions at one particularly notorious kella are described by Walker in some detail in FO 371/9985, Walker to Thesiger, 27.3.19; cf. Pankhurst, pp. 522-24, and CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Russell, 7.4.22.

2. SIR 168, July 1908, app. D.

3. Gabra Hiywat, p. 76; Fitawrari Deressa in B.S., 8.7.26; also O.I. (Tafari & Makurya); cf. Hiywat, p. 14.

4. FO 141/409, Hadow to Matthews, 29.8.07.

5. FO 141/409, Hohler to Gorst, 23.10.07.

Not all of the kella were relics of the past, however, as Minilik suggested. The 5% duty at the Sayo gate which occasioned a strong protest from Sudan officials and traders alike was collected by Ato Dalalan, a representative of Nagadras Sarsa Wald, himself appointed in charge of a network of customs in the countries of Jote and Kumsa by the nagadras of nagadras, Hayla Giyorgis.¹ It could thus be seen in the context of Hayla Giyorgis' efforts to obtain as tight a grip as possible over commercial activities throughout the empire. When his political fortune ebbed temporarily in 1909, Sarsa Wald also lost his post; a new nagadras, Yiglatu, was appointed. Tassamma meanwhile took advantage of the disappearance of both Sarsa Wald and Jote² from the stage to take control of the customs in the latter's country as well as those of the Watawit sheikhdoms.³

In 1907, local duties on commodities came nearer to the post, beginning a controversy over jurisdiction in the enclave that was to become even more acute in the 20's. At that early stage, however, things were settled rather smoothly. It was agreed that the officials should collect the duties on rubber, coffee and wax ready for export outside

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1. FO 141/393, encl. in Wingate to Cromer, 4.12.05; SIR 145, Aug 1906; Garretson, p.322. In 1907, Minilik is said to have accredited a certain Ato Sarsa Madhin in place of Ras Tassamma to receive the Ethiopian share of Gambella customs on his behalf, CRO Intel 2/24/189, Matthews to civ sec, 18.4.07. It is probable that the name actually referred to Sarsa Wald.
 2. See above, p. 197.
 3. SIR 188, Mar 1910, app.

the enclave.¹ In 1916, the placing of the Baro plains under Ydlibi's authority signalled the institution of new taxes and the revival of old ones to cover administrative costs and the campaigns of Majid Abud, as well as no doubt for the personal enrichment of Ydlibi himself.²

After the deposition of Iyasu in 1916, Tafari, much like Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis before him, began to assert control over provincial customs - a policy resented by both the British consul in Gore and provincial governors. In 1917, Tafari re-appointed Astatqe, who had once been to Europe and spoke French and German, as Gore nagadras in place of Gizaw in what Walker believed was a move to make the province a personal fief for himself. Dajach Kabada, then in the capital, refused to recognize the appointment and despatched an order to his representative, Qañazmach Tassamma, to turn Astatqe back by force. Tassamma probably got moral support from one of the chief merchants, Timoleon of Gerolimato & Co., who had reportedly written to Tafari objecting to Astatqe's appointment. Tafari acquiesced in the defiance of his authority.³

In 1919, the British legation made a strongly worded

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1. CRO Intel 2/24/189, Hadow, 29.8.07. Hadow, an inspector, commented rather sympathetically: "They receive no wages from the Emperor and levy this duty to obtain food for themselves."
 2. SIR 259 & 260, Feb & Mar 1916; FO 371/2227, encl. in Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 23.1.15; see above, p. 141.
 3. CRO Intel 2/25/200, 4.7.14; Intel 1/13/61, Walker to Thesiger, 9.5.17, 23.5.17, 6.8.17.

protest to Ras Tafari at the imposition of new taxes and kella which it claimed amounted to an extra burden of 15% in duties on merchants. The minister assured Tafari he had nothing personal against the Ethiopian official involved, Nagadras Makonnin, but indicted the whole Ethiopian system of government whereby officials and soldiers were not paid any salaries but were left to prey on trade and agriculture.¹

In 1922, Tafari sent another official to Gore to levy municipal taxes to the value of a dollar per 100 kg. of salt and half a dollar per tin of petroleum. Walker and the merchants protested strongly against the additional imposition on salt claiming that it was already being sold at a loss merely in order to get the dollars to purchase coffee. What made the new tax even more unbearable to the merchants was the fact that they were asked to make retrospective payments on their proceeds of the previous two years. The higher price of salt resulting from the new tax also meant that salt from the capital could be sold more cheaply, despite the long distance it had to travel to Gore. In response to a petition from the merchants and diplomatic protest from the legation, it appears, Tafari revoked his order, though after procuring revenue large enough for him to afford to give Ras Nadaw, then governor of Gore, 570 dollars for road-building.² At the same time, Nagadras Zawga, whom

1. CRO Intel 1/14/62, British legation to Walker, 3.7.19; cf. FO 371/3498, Campbell to acting GG, 12.12.08.

2. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Dodds, 3.8.22, 20.9.22, 25.10.22, 7.3.23; FO 371/7152, Dodds to GG, 11.10.22.

Tafari had made independent of Nadaw, continued to levy taxes of one kind or another which yielded an annual revenue estimated at 20,000 dollars.¹ Walker, like Timoleon, in the case of Astatqe, was apprehensive of control from the capital and worked to ensure that Nadaw, over whom he could exercise greater influence, got complete financial control in the province.²

He did not have much success in this. Tafari's policy was to have more and more of "the young intelligentsia" (in Walker's words) in positions where they could act as a counterweight to the power of such provincial governors as Nadaw. Walker tried to build an alliance with Nadaw to repel the intrusion from the centre.³ But, despite their very cordial relations marked by exchanges of whisky and taj (Ethiopian mead) and a mutual zest for road building, consul and governor were unable to stop the nagadras.⁴ Tafassa, who succeeded Zawga in 1926, was threatened with punishment by Nadaw when he tried to levy duties and had to flee the province. But Tafari rang Nadaw and told him that Tafassa had his backing. Nadaw apologized and received the nagadras with honour.⁵

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1. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Dodds, 20.9.22.
 2. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Russell, 2.4.24.
 3. CRO Civ Sec 65/7/23, Walker to Maclean, 28.7.26.
 4. O.I. (Kasahun, Tirunah).
 5. O.I. (Walda Samayat).
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In essence, Tafari's policy seems to have been to institute a customs department very much on the model of the one in Dire Dawa. The man who was instrumental in implementing this policy for Tafari was a certain George Neumair, a Syrian. He imposed dues amounting to a total of about 7%. The trading station at Gambella suffered in particular because it depended on Sayo for its food supplies, which were now subject to the tax. Walker found it both incomprehensible and inexcusable that the Ethiopian authorities should think in terms of establishing a department to rival the Sudan government customs at Gambella, whose revenue was shared equally by both governments.

"This new policy is impossible and discourteous," he argued, "and either the Abyssinians must cease to blackmail the station, trusting the Sudan Customs Department to do the work on behalf of [the] two Governments, or some solution of the situation must be found by which the Abyssinians may share in the Customs work and contribute to the expense of supervision. They are now trying to have it both ways - accepting the half of the Gambella Customs dues from the Sudan Government and at the same time profiting locally by the creation of new taxes on trade. These they do not share with us."¹

He felt that the whole thing arose out of a misconception among local officials who regarded Gambella as an alien station, thus contradicting his assertion of a conscious programme, directed from the capital, to establish a customs department for the west.² All indications are that the latter was more the case, although the former too had some element of truth in it.

1. SMIR 324, July 1921.

2. Ibid.

The Syrian inspector continued to levy his separate dues. The British consul changed his argument from joint supervision of customs collection to a fundamental revision of procedure which might necessitate the Sudan government levying only its share of duties as Gambella trade could scarcely compete with that of the capital under the yoke of double taxation. He feared that Neumair was contemplating a 10% export duty as in Dire Dawa and recommended the retention by the Sudan government of the Ethiopian share of the 6% duty on coffee, amounting to some 30,000 dollars annually, as the Ethiopian authorities would, he claimed, gain about 2000 dollars if they collected duties themselves at their own rate. A few months later, Neumair was dismissed rather mysteriously.¹ But the controversy did not end there. It was merely the beginning of the big debate on the future of Gambella.

Tafari formally opened the question during his London visit in July 1924, when, in an audience with the British prime minister, Ramsey MacDonald, he argued that the lease of the enclave by Ethiopia did not entitle the Sudan to collect customs, which was tantamount to collecting taxes in Ethiopian territory.² He followed this up with a note to the British legation, demanding that the Sudan cease collecting customs from Gambella. As a sign of protest, he returned the cheque for £8,616 which he had been given as the Ethiopian share of the Gambella and Kurmuk

1. CRO Intel 1/4/64, Walker to Russell, 16.5.23, 5.9.23, 27.2.24.

2. FO 371/9992, record of conversation, 16.7.24.

customs for 1924-25.¹ After a meeting of the British minister and representatives of the Sudan government and the Foreign Office in London, Tafari's demand was granted and the Sudan government was instructed to cease collecting customs at Gambella and to make alternative arrangements. Taking their cue from Tafari, the officials also decided at the meeting that payment of the Ethiopian share of customs was to be suspended until the position became clear. But the share of Matamma customs was to continue being paid to Gugsu as usual.²

The decision to comply with Tafari's demands seems to have been largely inspired by Sir G. Schuster of the Sudan Government Office in London. In a letter to the Foreign Office a few days before the meeting, he argued that there was no reason why the Sudan should not stop collecting customs at Gambella. The duties on all exports and re-exports from the Sudan as well as the chief Ethiopian export items, coffee, were collected at Khartoum. Duty on goods destined for areas south of Khartoum could easily be collected at Nasser. On the more fundamental issue of the procedure of the Sudan collecting duties on behalf both of itself and the Ethiopian government and then sharing it equally, he cited the 1924 trade figures to show that the latter in fact gained by the arrangement. The total dues collected were £E20,264, which gave Ethiopia a share of £E10,132. If the two governments had collected their

1. FO 371/11575, Maclean to Chamberlain, 15.6.26; CRO Civ Sec 13/2/5, Hiruy to Maclean, 3.11.27.

2. FO 371/11575, note on meeting, 14.10.26.

dues separately, the Sudan would have stood to gain by the ££1,858 and Ethiopia to lose by an equal sum - i.e. a total of ££11,990 to the Sudan and of ££8,274 to Ethiopia.¹ The whole calculation of course assumed that the Ethiopian government was satisfied with the scale of duties then in force. On the contrary, earlier indications were that Tafari was aiming at an export duty rate much higher than the 1% the Sudan was levying on Ethiopia's behalf. The additional tax imposed on salt in 1922 was an indication that the rate of duty on import too was far from satisfactory as far as the Ethiopian government was concerned. On the above assumption, at any rate, Schuster recommended: "Shift our customs station from Gambeila, stop giving them a share in the duties, and wait and see what happens." The British minister was meanwhile to make as much political capital out of the gracious gesture as possible.²

News of the British decision was received joyfully in Ethiopia and hailed as a brilliant victory for Tafari's personal diplomacy. Nagadras Tafassa was instructed to take over the Gambella customs with two assistants, one of whom, Takala Walda Hawaryat, was later to emerge as one of the heroes of Ethiopian resistance to Italian rule and a serious opponent to Haile Selassie after his restoration.³ The next question

1. FO 371/11575, Schuster to Murray, 5.10.26.

2. Ibid. FO 371/12348, Murray to Lloyd, 19.2.27; FO 371/12353, 25.1.27.

3. B.S., 13.1.27; FO 371/12353, 10.9.27; FO 371/12348, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 25.1.27.

was the fate of the Sudan government customs house in the enclave. In an interesting interview with the British minister, Tafari raised the issue of its sale to the Ethiopian government, as the Sudan no longer had any use for it. He also suggested that, as the Sudan would no longer share the dues collected with Ethiopia, it was only fair that the former should pay rent for the trading post. Arguing that the 1902 treaty which created the enclave provided for no such rent, the minister was inclined to give a blank refusal to the requests, but in view of the fact "that the Gambeila question may prove a useful pawn for us to play off against the Tsana question," he promised to refer them to Khartoum.¹ Such a possibility of securing the Tana bull by sacrificing the Gambella lamb was not far from the minds of the Foreign Office and the rival powers, France and Italy, either.²

Khartoum, in characteristic form, was sensitive to such a line of thinking. While conceding that the Ethiopians retained the right to levy whatever duties they wanted to, it argued that diplomatic efforts should be directed towards persuading them to retain the old rates in the interest of trade rather than towards the rendition of the enclave in pursuit of a higher objective.³ Or, as a Foreign Office official put it for Khartoum rather sympathetically: "'let us not kill the

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1. FO 371/12348, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 25.1.27.
 2. FO 371/12348, Murray to Lloyd, 19.2.27; FO 371/12353, 10.9.27.
 3. FO 371/12348, Lloyd to FO, 26.2.27.

goose that lays golden eggs for each of us and let us agree among ourselves to retain the old rates."¹ The British minister in Addis Ababa was less sympathetic. He fumed at Khartoum's imperviousness to the great imperial argument of sacrificing Gambella as "a beau geste [to] get what we have longed and worked for for twenty five years," i.e. the Tana reservoir.² With further prodding from the Foreign Office, Khartoum was forced to spell out its arguments for the retention of Gambella. What were again prominent in Khartoum's arguments were political, more than commercial, considerations for keeping the post. Evacuation would result in loss of prestige in the border areas and an intensification of raiding activities and Anyuua migration into the Sudan thitherto restrained, so the argument ran, by British presence in Gambella. The enclave should not therefore be made a pawn unless as a final measure "to clinch the Tsana bargain." In the circumstances, Khartoum was strongly opposed even to the idea of letting Ethiopian officials collect customs inside the enclave. Further, the immediate task for the Sudan was to dissuade the Ethiopian government from imposing rates that would be so high as to stifle trade.³

Fixing the new rates soon became the subject of negotiation between the two sides. The governor general in

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1. FO 371/12348, minutes on Bentinck to FO, 28.2.27.
 2. FO 371/12348, Bentinck to Murray, 12.3.27; Bentinck to FO, 28.2.27.
 3. FO 371/12348, Murray to MacMichael, 14.4.27; MacMichael to Murray, 28.4.27.

Khartoum, Sir John Maffey, was hoping for an arrangement which almost completely ignored the Ethiopian sensitivity to, sovereignty that had triggered the issue in the first place. In a directive to the official responsible for negotiating on Sudan's behalf, he stipulated that no export duty was to be levied on either side and that the import duty rate was to remain at 8%. Even more significantly, he expected Ethiopian authorities to accept valuation of rates applicable for both countries to be fixed by the Sudan.¹ The official on the spot, A.D. Home, was more amenable to Ethiopian requirements. Initially, the Ethiopian officials - among them Nagadras Zallaqa, minister of commerce; Blatta Hiruy, imperial counsellor; and Ato Birhana Marqos, private secretary for foreign affairs - spoke in terms of 2½% export duty from Ethiopia, an equivalent rate of import duty into the Sudan on all Ethiopian produce, and a 10% duty on all goods entering Ethiopia. Home objected to the second on the ground that Ethiopian produce could not be allowed to pay less import duty than Uganda produce, which was 5%, and advised against the third by warning that the Sudan would retaliate by imposing a similar rate of import duty on Ethiopian produce.² Instead, he recommended that Ethiopian produce pay 5% export duty and a similar rate of import duty into the Sudan. 10% was to be levied by Ethiopia on non-Sudan goods entering the country in

1. FO 371/12348, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 15.8.27.

2. FO 371/12348, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 15.8.27.

transit or otherwise, as opposed to 5% on Sudan goods. The municipal and kotte (road) taxes on the Ethiopian side, valued at 8-10%, were to remain in force. The recommendations were accepted by the Ethiopian authorities in substance and the final agreement was very much in line with them.¹

What protracted the negotiations was the issues of a special Sudan rate on Ethiopian tobacco and a 1% export duty on Sudan products. It all seemed a rather belated move on the part of the Sudan government, although it claimed that the 20 milliemes or so that were intended to be levied per kg of Ethiopian tobacco was lower than the standard rate.² Ethiopian officials were outraged by the suggestion of a 20 millieme rate which was "more than twice the value of a kilogramme of tobacco" and threatened to reciprocate by levying extra duties on cigarettes of Sudan manufacture.³ The Foreign Office goaded Khartoum on not to relent on either the export duty or tobacco rates; only exports to Egypt, it argued, were exempt from duty.⁴ The British legation in Addis Ababa, while agreeing that Khartoum should stand firm on the export duty, urged waiving the tobacco duty to avert the danger of wrecking the negotiations.⁵ Khartoum eventually came round to the

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1. FO 371/12348, encls. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 15.8.27; note by Home, 20.8.27.
 2. FO 371/12348, Hewins to Patrick, 21.10.27.
 3. FO 371/12348, Bentinck to Maclean, 10.10.27; Maclean to FO, 30.10.27; Bentinck to Khartoum, 9.12.27.
 4. FO 371/12348, FO to Bentinck, 8.11.27.
 5. FO 371/12348, Bentinck to FO, 16.11.27.

legation's viewpoint and expressed readiness to forego the duty on tobacco.¹ As the Ethiopian government, while insisting that the export duty of 1% was a new question, was ready to give it sympathetic consideration, this new posture narrowed the gap between the two parties.² The agreement that was eventually concluded on 3rd March 1928 entitled Khartoum to levy not only the 1% export duty but also 5 milliemes per kg. of Ethiopian tobacco.³

In the early 30's, two issues arose which were a further indication of the Ethiopian government's determination to assert what it considered its sovereign rights vis-à-vis the powers and had a bearing on trade between Ethiopia and the Sudan in general and the customs agreement in particular. The first of this was the granting in May 1930 of a monopoly on the salt trade in the country to a Franco-Ethiopian company in which the Ethiopian government, most probably Tafari himself, had 40% of the shares.⁴ Mohammedally & Co., a famous Indian house, were to be the company's agent in eastern Ethiopia, and Seferian & Co. in western Ethiopia.⁵ A subsequent government notice confirmed the monopoly, threatened violators with a fine of ten dollars per one hundred kgs. of salt or imprisonment (in addition to confiscation of their stock) and promised

FO 371/12348, encl. in Lloyd to FO, 29.11.27.

2. FO 371/12348, Bentinck to Khartoum, 9.12.27.

3. FO 371/13101, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 10.3.28.

4. B.S., 8.5.30; FO 371/14598, Troutbeck to Henderson, 13.5.30.

5. FO 371/14598, Barton to Henderson, 16.9.30.

rewards of three dollars per one hundred kg. of salt confiscated to persons who volunteered information on any contravention of the notice.¹

Diplomatic reaction to the monopoly was diverse. The British were the most sensitive, for obvious reasons. The French were the most lukewarm, again for obvious reasons. One of the chief commodities imported into Gambella from the Sudan, if not the only one, was salt and the monopoly posed a direct threat to this trade. But the British could not easily find a legal basis for their protest. They tried to cite provisions of both the so-called Klobukowski treaty of 1908 - or what one can properly call the Ethiopian Capitulations - and the 1906 tripartite agreement. Article 2 of the former, named after a French special envoy to Ethiopia at the time, barred the Ethiopian government from granting any monopolies except those that were in force in France. But the wording of the article was not precise and to engage in a debate on French grammar, as one Foreign Office official put it, was "an uninviting prospect." The British also found article 2 of the 1906 agreement between France, Italy and Britain which enjoined the representatives of the three powers to ensure that concessions given to one of them might not prejudice the interests of the two others, not an effective line of argument as they deemed the threat from the monopoly to be more potential than actual.²

1. B.S. 28.3.35.

2. FO 371/14598, Barton to Henderson, 16.9.30; Troutbeck to Murray, 20.5.30.

~~Diplomatic~~ The French minister argued that the monopoly was in fact within the scope of the Klobukowski treaty as salt monopolies existed in some French colonies. While conceding that the company had links with the salt industry at Jibouti, he doubted that the monopoly would adversely affect the interests of the other powers, as insufficient supply and transport costs would militate against the company competing with the established interests in Massawa (Italian) and the Sudan (British).¹ He also found the idea of joint diplomatic protest against the monopoly one-sided in view of the fact that the diplomatic body did not raise a voice when an alcohol monopoly was renewed in 1922.² He reiterated this position in a meeting of the diplomatic body on 7th June where a letter from the expatriate commercial community protesting against the monopoly was discussed, and where the British minister portrayed the monopoly as highly damaging to British interests. The minister had to be content with what he felt was only a mild note of protest by the diplomatic body to the Ethiopian government against the granting of all monopolies, which was all that the French were ready to endorse.³

Early the following year came the reaction of the Ethiopian government in the form of a letter from Hiruy, the foreign minister, to the French minister, who was dean of the

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1. FO 371/14598, Troutbeck to Henderson, 13.5.30.
 2. FO 371/14598, Barton to FO, 21.6.30; Barton to Henderson, 16.9.30.
 3. FO 371/14598, Barton to Henderson, 16.9.30.

diplomatic corps. t. Hiruy challenged the point that the salt monopoly violated any international agreement, referring to the assurance of the French minister that it was not contrary to the provisions of the Klobukowski treaty. He also exposed the inconsistency of the position of the European powers by pointing out their acquiescence and interest in the alcohol monopoly. Reminding them of their own unrestricted right to institute monopolies in the metropolitan countries as well as the colonies, he concluded that "Nous avons donc l'honneur de vous prier de bien vouloir expliquer à vos Collègues que le Gouvernement Ethiopian a le droit de créer lui aussi le monopole du sel pour avoir de l'argent dont il a besoin pour la prospérité de son pays."¹

What little unity the diplomatic body had, vanished in the light of the Ethiopian reaction. The British minister regretted that the powers had let the alcohol monopoly be used as a precedent-the Belgians because they had an interest in it, and the French and British because their quiescence was bought by giving them shares. The French minister was evasive about any joint action. The Belgian minister altogether withdrew from the protest claiming that the Klobukowski treaty did not prohibit such monopolies as alcohol and salt. In the end, the British were left with empty rhetoric: "We must in the interests of foreign trade continue to contest the right of the Ethiopian Government to create monopolies at will." More pragmatically, they sought to come to some kind of

1. FO 371/15389, encl. in Barton to Henderson, 12.2.31.

arrangement with the monopoly holders allowing fixed quotas of salt through Somaliland and the Sudan.¹ Later attempts by both the Italians and the British to find the magic clause in the Klobukowski treaty that would revive the legal battle failed.²

A combination of circumstances, of which the salt monopoly was one, depressed Gambella trade. The 1931 total trade figure was a new record low level of £E76,512, in contrast to the 1930 figure of £E226,764. Traditionally, Khartoum traders had brought along bags of salt to Gambella to sell for coffee. This was no longer possible. Low prices for coffee in Khartoum also discouraged the coffee trade. Only about £E53,000 worth of coffee was exported in 1931, compared to over £E167,000 worth in the preceding year. Instead, some coffee was despatched overland to Roseires and Addis Ababa. The raising of transport rates by the Ethiopian Motor Transport Company on the road between Gambella and Baro Qala worsened the situation.³ The liquidation of Messrs. Tabet Bros., an important financial house in Khartoum involved in Ethiopian trade, was an additional factor.⁴

In March 1931 came another shock to the foreign powers. The Ethiopian government decreed an excise and

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1. FO 371/15389, Barton to Henderson, 12.2.31; also minutes.
 2. FO 371/15389, Troutbeck to Henderson, 3.4.31; FO to Troutbeck, 30.4.31.
 3. See below, pp. 351-67, for EMTC.
 4. FO 371/15389, AAIR, Oct-Dec 1930, Jan-Mar 1931, Oct-Dec 1931, Jan-Mar 1932; Secretary for Ec. Devt. & Statistics of Foreign Trade, A.R., 1932-33, p.5; DUR 212/14/11, encl. in Maurice to govr. UNP, 28.12.30.

consumption tax on some locally produced as well as imported goods. The list included certain alcoholic drinks, cigarettes, mineral water, salt, matches, incense, furniture, umbrellas, abujedid, carpets, and underwear. The rates ranged from 10% to 30% ad valorem. Later decrees reduced the rates on some articles, excluded some altogether from the list (e.g. salt, abu jedid, and threads), and added some more (e.g. chat, coffee, and tobacco).¹ The reason given for the introduction of this new tax was to finance the purchase of the Bank of Abyssinia, thitherto a British concern, and to institute a gold currency.²

On 24th September, the French, Italian, and British ministers made a joint protest against the introduction of the new tax, arguing that it was contrary to the Klobukowski treaty and the Gambella customs agreement of 1928.³ They expressed their willingness to negotiate an extension of the percentages fixed by the Klobukowski treaty provided the Ethiopian government refrained from introducing consumption taxes unilaterally.⁴ The negotiations, which included the issue

1. B.S., 26.3.31, 3.8.33; FO 371/15389, AAIR, July-Sept 1931.

2. B.S., 26.3.31.

3. Art. 3. of the Klobukowski treaty had stipulated a 10% ad valorem tax on French goods imported into Ethiopia and an even lower 8% on drinks, alcoholic and non-alcoholic. In May 1909, at the request of the British minister, Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis, then minister of trade and foreign affairs, had extended the 8% provision to the British as well, in line with article 4 of the 1897 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty which had provided for such an extension. See FO 371/597, encl. in Hervey to Grey, 22.7.09.

4. FO 371/15389, AAIR, July-Sept 1931.

of extraterritoriality, had failed by 10th October when the British minister blamed the expatriate advisers of the Ethiopian government and lamented: "It is unfortunate that the representatives of 'Young Abyssinia' in their legitimate and praiseworthy strivings after progress should have been thus misled in their choice of methods to free their Government from the fetters of 'unequal treaties'."¹

What Barton characterized as the spirit of "Young Abyssinia" was in evidence in an article in the Amharic weekly of the time, Birhanina Salam, defending the new taxes. Disputing the allegation that the taxes were primarily directed against foreign interests, the writer pointed out that locally produced articles were affected as well and that the tax was heaviest on luxury items. He went on to assert the sovereign right of any free government to impose whatever taxes it deemed necessary.² A European observer also denied that the outcry of merchants that the new taxes were detrimental to trade had any justification.³

Nor did the British exhibit the zealous and uncompromising opposition that they had shown in connection with the salt monopoly. In fact, one can say the French and British traded positions on the two issues. Where they had pursued a policy of passive resistance bordering on indifference

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1. FO 371/15393, Barton to Reading, 12.10.31.
 2. B.S., 30.4.31.
 3. Mackereth, p.9.
 4. FO 371/16101, memo by the Fr. ambassador in London, 22.1.32.

in the case of the salt monopoly, the French now became the leading spirit in the protest against the new taxes. They insisted that any change in tax rates had to be within the framework of the Klobukowski treaty and proposed a uniform 50% rise in the rates cited in article 3 - i.e. 15% instead of 10% and 12% instead of 8% - and a simultaneous revision of the extraterritoriality clause in article 7.¹ The Foreign Office, dropping the suggestion of retaliatory duties or appeal to The Hague made earlier by the British minister, advised him not to adopt too stiff and exacting a position and even hinted at the possibility of a separate Anglo-Ethiopian agreement if the French proved too uncompromising.² When it realized that the Italians, like the French, were for a firm and united stand vis-à-vis the Ethiopian government, the Foreign Office changed its position somewhat, but only to adopt a policy of "wait and see".³

Ostensibly, the reluctance of the Foreign Office to adopt a tough attitude, including consideration of reprisals, was explicable by respect for the position of the Sudan government in the matter.⁴ But it did not hesitate to try and use the Gambella customs agreement as a lever in the

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1. FO 371/16101, memo by the Fr. ambassador in London, 22.1.32.
 2. FO 371/15393, Peterson to Barton, 29.12.31; FO 371/16101, minutes on memo by Fr. ambassador in London, 22.1.32.
 3. FO 371/16101, Italian ambassador in London to Simon, 1.3.32; FO to Board of Trade, 14.3.32.
 4. FO 371/16101, FO minutes, 1.7.32.

negotiations relating to the Klobukowski treaty and the Tana reservoir when the agreement came up for renewal in early 1933 - thereby reviving once again the recurrent conflict between the imperial desiderata of London and the administrative priorities of Khartoum. In fact, the British policy, as enunciated by Barton, the British minister in Addis Ababa, smacked of trying to use one weapon for two rather opposite objectives. On the one hand, he attached great importance to the negotiations for the renewal of the agreement in light of what he felt were signs of preference for British commercial outlets by the Emperor after the French raised duties and portage charges at Jibouti. Such a consideration would seem to explain, at least partly, the British failure to give the French solid backing in their fight against the new taxes. On the other hand, he made settlement on Gambella conditional on the Ethiopian government respecting such international agreements as the Klobukowski treaty, which was precisely what the French wanted.¹ Khartoum naturally resented such an association of what it regarded as a domestic issue with the vagaries of international diplomacy.²

In the ensuing months, the two issues - the renewal of the customs agreement and the new taxes - became closely

1. FO 371/16103, Barton to GG, 17.10.32; minutes to above.

2. FO 371/16989, encl. in Barton to FO, 2.3.33; encl. in Campbell to FO, 13.3.33.

interrelated. Early in March, the Ethiopian government submitted its proposals for the modification of the agreement. Broadly these fell into two categories. The first involved increases in certain duties. The second pertained to the procedure of customs collection and, to the British, impinged on the status of the enclave.¹ Here again, their reaction varied from Khartoum to the legation in Addis Ababa. The former had a hard-line approach to the matter. The latter was more accommodating. Barton, while ready to stand firmly against the imposition of unlimited dues in violation of the Klobukowski treaty, was more understanding of the urgent need for revenue to cover administrative costs which dictated such increases. He also found it difficult to resist the procedural claims of the Ethiopian government, as the enclave was within Ethiopian territory.²

Erskine, the British consul in Gore, was more intransigent. He was vehemently opposed to the idea both of Sudan steamers tying up along a prospective Ethiopian customs house to be built outside the enclave and of permitting the Ethiopian government to build the house inside the enclave.³ Presumably, he wanted a continuation of the practice of the Sudan customs office in the enclave transmitting copies of the manifests on goods delivered by the steamers to the Ethiopian authorities based on the other side of Khor Jajjaba,

1. FO 371/16989, encl. in Barton to GG, 7.3.33.

2. FO 371/16989, Barton to GG, 7.3.33.

3. FO 371/16989, Erskine to Barton, 1.7.33.

the tributary to the Baro that separated the enclave from the Ethiopian village.¹ The Sudan government's position was similar to Erskine's. It was even prepared to see the efforts to renew the agreement fail as it considered its gains from transfrontier trade comparatively less than those of its Ethiopian counterpart.² The British minister tried to assure Khartoum of the genuine desire of the Ethiopian government to come to an agreement and pointed out the difficulty of making special concessions for the Sudan as regards the excise and consumption taxes in view of the negotiations still pending with the other interested parties. Khartoum retorted that the preferential treatment given to Ethiopian exports in the Sudan entitled it to special consideration.³ It refused to embark on negotiations before its bases for such negotiations - including the separation of the issue of the status of the enclave from the customs agreement and a reduction of the excise and consumption duties - were accepted by the Ethiopian government.⁴ The latter declined to include the duties in the negotiations and further insisted on the right of Ethiopian officials to collect them at the landing stage in the enclave which was unacceptable to Khartoum. Consideration of prestige, frontier tranquility, expansion of trade, and the vested interests of Sudan firms, it argued, dictated against any "intrusion" of Ethiopian administration in the enclave. The

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1. DUR 212/14/11, encl. in Maurice to govr. UNP, 28.12.30.
 2. FO 371/16989, encl. in Campbell to FO, 22.3.33.
 3. FO 371/16989, Barton to Simon, 22.5.33; Bell to Barton, 23.5.33.
 4. FO 371/16989, Bell to Barton, 28.5.33.

status of the enclave, too, could not be mixed up with a customs agreement, as it derived from a formal treaty and held for as long as Sudan remained under British rule. The following summed up Khartoum's stand:

"It is, indeed, true that, however deplorable a complete cessation of commerce with Abyssinia might be, its immediate effect would be to benefit the Sudan Treasury, which would profit more, both in customs dues and freights, by the import of coffee from Kenya and Brazil, than it now does by the trade in Abyssinian coffee.¹

In such an attitude of indifference to transfrontier trade, Khartoum persisted. The legation tried to raise the specter of Ethiopia diverting its entire trade to Jibouti. Khartoum replied that such a move would only affect the merchants, not the Sudan treasury.²

So in trade, as in administration, the "forward policy" advocated by both the Foreign Office in London and the British legation in Addis Ababa did not strike a chord in Khartoum. In a classic defence of Sudan's attitude of indifference, G.S. Symes, the governor general, stated in 1934: "the forward policy was based on political assumptions that were disproved and commercial anticipations which have not been realized." One of those political assumptions was Thesiger's forecast in 1911 of an early disintegration of the Ethiopian empire. He also pointed out the negligible contribution of Ethiopian trade to the total Sudan trade

1. FO 371/16989, Bell to Broadmead, 29.6.33; Broadmead to FO, 26.6.33; FO minutes, 4.10.33.

and the "exiguous state of Sudan finances" which ruled out the pursuit of a vigorous commercial policy. The rendition of the enclave which the Ethiopians were after should be strongly resisted, however, unless they were ready to give the British "a satisfactory quid pro quo." Gambella, in short, was to be a pawn in Anglo-Ethiopian diplomacy. "I realize," Symes concluded his letter to the British minister regretfully, "that an adventurous policy might have useful political reactions and could assist your treatment of Abyssinian problems, many of which affect the Sudan. The frank answer is that, in existing circumstances, we have not and cannot supply the means to implement a more forward policy."¹

1. FO 371/19189, Symes to Barton, 6.7.34.

CHAPTER 5

The Gambella Trading Post (II)Transport and Communications.

Among the daunting problems that the Gambella trading post faced from its inception were those of transport and communications. The sheer physical difficulties encumbering a post located in such a unique position as Gambella - surrounded by malaria-infested plains, separated from the areas to be tapped on the plateau by precipitous escarpments - appear so insuperable that the very idea of establishing it in the first place would strike one as a wild commercial venture. To these were added problems associated with the peculiar legal status of the enclave itself, the very low level of development of infrastructure in Ethiopia, and the more general character of an economy where commodity production had scarcely begun. But its potential of drawing off the rich produce of western Ethiopia made the trading post singularly attractive to the British. This tension between potential and reality remained important in British imperial considerations on the subject throughout the period.

I. Steamer Transport and the Question of Railway Communication

A Sudan government steamer service constituted Gambella's main link with the outside world. The first cargo of coffee was taken from Gambella in 1904 by the Warana, a ship of very light draught improved from materials recovered from Mahdist steamers, an old road

traction engine, and an old water pump.¹ Thereafter, between the end of May and November, when the rainy season in Ethiopia made the Baro navigable, steamers were able to transport goods to and from Gambella. But the five-month service was not always possible. Sometimes, as in 1914, the level of the water was too low to allow more than three months or so.² The steamers, which generally had a $3-3\frac{1}{2}$ ft. draught, had to make frequent stops, sometimes lasting a day, to fetch wood for fuelling, and one traveller in 1906 described them as record-breakers for slowness.³ The absence of coal in the Sudan presented a general setback for steamer transport. Steamers had a lot of space taken up by the large amount of wood they had to carry, as fuelling stations were widely separated.⁴ According to a 1912 commercial report, the 880 mile journey from Khartoum to Gambella was expected to take about 11 days, while the return journey downstream took about a week.⁵ In 1914, steamers were advertised to depart from Khartoum on the 27th of each month, beginning in May, and to reach Khartoum on the return journey by the 22nd of the following month.⁶ This contrasted very favourably with the period of more than

1. Richard Hill, Sudan Transport (London, 1965), pp. 57, 60.

2. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913.

3. Landor, pp. 217-18.

4. C.H. Page, "Inland Water Navigation of the Sudan", SNR, II (1919), p. 294; cf. Hill, Sudan Transport, pp. 63-64.

5. A&P, vol. 29 (1913), C.R., Abyssinia, 1911-12.

6. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913.

5% import duty into the Sudan and the 1% export duty two months that the one-way journey from Gore to Jibouti from Ethiopia), in contrast to the 8% levied at Port Sudan. Yet, the price of Ethiopian coffee in Omdurman when the projected railway from Addis Ababa to Jibouti was cheaper than its American competitor; in fact had barely entered Ethiopian territory.¹

The rates of transport were also cheaper via Gambella than via Jibouti. The cost of transporting a ton of beeswax, essentially a transit trade item, from Gore to London through Gambella was £23.10s., compared to £29.10s. from Addis Ababa via Jibouti. Cotton goods were also reported to reach Gore via Gambella £4 cheaper than Addis Ababa via Jibouti. The through rate to Port Sudan, including weighing, loading, and unloading charges, was £5.675 per ton for coffee, £6.555 for wax, £12.170 for rubber, and £15.920 for ivory.² Coffee destined for consumption in the Sudan, which was largely the case, was transported to Khartoum at the higher rate of 20 P.T. (Eg. piastres) per kantar (= £4.480 per ton, as opposed to £3.620 on the through rate).³

In 1911, Captain S.F. Newcombe, after a visit to western Ethiopia, recommended an increase in rates. He argued that the Sudan government was maintaining Gambella at a loss, as it took only 3% customs on coffee from Gambella (i.e. 1/2 of the 6% total made up of the

1. SIR 117, Apr. 1904.

2. A&P, vol. 46 (1912-13), C.R., Gambella, 1911; vol. 29 (1913), C.R., Abyssinia, 1911-12.

3. CRO Intel 1/13/57, Newcombe report in Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 26.4.11.

5% import duty into the Sudan and the 1% export duty from Ethiopia), in contrast to the 8% levied at Port Sudan. Yet, the price of Ethiopian coffee in Omdurman was no cheaper than its American competitor; in fact it was slightly higher. Hence, Gambella merchants like Ydlibi could afford to pay high prices for coffee in Gore. Newcombe therefore suggested a squeeze on the merchants by raising the rates. He did not specify the rate for transport to Omdurman, but recommended 30 PT. per kantar as a through rate to Port Sudan; he considered this low enough to encourage the extension of the coffee trade to such markets as Aden and Suez.¹ The recommendation was not received favourably either in Khartoum or at the British legation in Addis Ababa. It was felt that a rise in rates, far from achieving the desired reduction in transport charges and local exactions on the Ethiopian side, would only force bigger merchants to cut down their commitments and "crush out the smaller traders altogether". Walker, the British commercial inspector in Gambella, even suggested that the through rate for coffee be lowered to 15 PT. per kantar.²

A much more enduring preoccupation of the Sudan government was the possibility of maintaining year-round communication between Gambella and Khartoum. One official deplored the closure of the trading post for the greater part of the year, "as the trade with Gambela

1. Ibid.; SIR 201, Apr. 1911.

2. CRO Intel 1/13/57, Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 26.4.11.; Wingate to Thesiger, 29.5.11.

is the most extensive of any south of Khartoum, and there is no doubt that if permanent communication were possible the already prosperous trade with this part of Abyssinia would very greatly and immediately increase";¹ a decline in the volume of Gambella trade generally had a corresponding effect on the steamer traffic.² One possibility considered to overcome this problem was an overland caravan route from Gambella to an area of permanent navigability on the Sobat, a line that Capato's agent had tried right from the outset. In Wilson in 1904 discouraged such an undertaking as the intervening country was unadministered and sparsely inhabited. He maintained that the steamer service as it stood would adequately meet the requirements of the trading post, provided a warehouse was built in the enclave to store goods in the dry season.³ By 1911, a warehouse had been constructed at Gambella, with a monthly charge of 1 PT. per $1\frac{1}{2}$ kantar of goods deposited.

But the quest for an overland route continued. In 1912, when the last boat failed to reach Gambella because of an early fall in the level of water, Thesiger revived the idea of a caravan route from Gambella to Machar, from where all-year-round navigation was deemed possible. Timoleon, one of the principal merchants in Gambella, was even contemplating a camel caravan.⁴ Alternatively, it

1. Page, p. 298.

2. Sudan Handbook, p. 729.

3. SIR 117, Apr. 1904.

4. CRO Intel 1/13/58, Thesiger to Wingate, 30.11.12.; FO 371/19189, memo on Gambella, 6.3.35.

was suggested that the steamers could be fed by smaller barges plying to and from Gambella.¹ Walker claimed that steamers could go even further up the Baro than Machar (i.e. to the mouth of the Adura), scoffed at the idea of camel transport, and saw the solution in a light steam tramway from the Adura to Gambella along the south bank of the Baro. The only obstacle he saw was the fact that the tramway would have to pass through land belonging to the Baro Syndicate.²

In 1920, the Abyssinian Corporation, as one of its multifarious commitments in Ethiopia,³ pondered the question of year-round communication between Gambella and Khartoum. While in general welcoming the efforts of the corporation, Sir Lee Stack, the governor-general of the Sudan, administered the usual dose of pessimism that was never lacking in Khartoum in such matters, to the dismay of the Foreign Office. He said: "The Sudan would be glad to develop the traffic with Abyssinia but it seems doubtful whether the present back-door outlet whatever is done can really compete in the long run with the railway via Jibuti as regards the overseas traffic. At any moment the introduction of a more liberal policy on the part of the latter would apparently sweep the bulk of the traffic to the East."⁴ All the same, Stack went on to

1. CRO Intel 2/24/193, memo on Gambella trade by Doughty-Wylie, 1.12.10.

2. CRO Intel 1/13/59, Walker to Thesiger, 9.1.13.

3. See below, pp. 352, 404-14.

4. FO 371/4392, note by Stack, 6.5.20.; see Sperling to Allenby, 12.7.20., for FO reaction. Cf. SIR 328, Nov. 1921.

put forward as the best solution to the problem of communications in western Ethiopia a move that would have made the trading post redundant, i.e. the extension of the projected Roseires railway line across the Belauance Shangul region to Gulisso, a commercial centre some 140 km. northwest of Gambella. It was a revival of what was sometimes referred to as "the western railway", another will-o'-the-wisp of British imperial strategy in Ethiopia. The scheme was first elaborately set out by Captain Newcombe in 1911. He pointed to the Didessa and Omo rivers as the natural dividing line between French and British spheres of interest and recommended an extension of the Sudan railway from Sennar to Gulisso, which he considered a better entrepôt than Gambella. He justified his choice of the new route by the fact that it would traverse a famous gold-rich region and an area of dense population and extensive cultivation. In view of the completion of the French railway in five years' time, too, he emphasized the urgency of the matter.¹ The French themselves, beset by the exceedingly slow pace of the construction of their line, were shaken from the complacency of the earlier years to a realization of the threat posed by their commercial rivals.² But Wingate's reaction to Newcombe's project was a somewhat unceremonious objection to "his fussing about the Abyssinian Railway", adding that

1. FO 371/1043, Newcombe report in WO to FO, 12.6.11.

2. Compare v. 39 (1903), p. 209, and v. 52 (1909), p. 176, of the Bull. Soc. Géog., Lille.

"with Abyssinia in its present state, the less we say about the Railway projects the better".¹ Doughty-Wylie, the British chargé d'affaires in Addis Ababa, saw the emphasis on the danger of the growth of French influence that underlay the project as misplaced and even countenanced the prospect of French occupation of the country with equanimity, arguing that they would make better neighbours "than the turbulent and ignorant Abyssinians". The question of gold mining, he said was "a subject for a financial pessimist". While he conceded the potential value of the railway for any "unfortunate" British military intervention that might be necessary, he denied its urgency, as there was a natural limit to the degree to which the French railway could draw off western Ethiopian trade from the Sudan and only the British had the treaty right for any westward extension of the railway from the capital.² An added reason was the strong Ethiopian suspicion of Sudan government intentions in western Ethiopia that was then prevalent.³ A few months later, Thesiger summed up the legation's attitude to the railway project thus:

"In the event of the ultimate partition of Abyssinia, when the west country would fall to Great Britain, such a railway would become a commercial necessity owing to the enormous progress

1. DUR 469/3, Wingate to Clayton, 23.7.11., 19.8.11.

2. FO 371/1043, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 2.8.11. The latter was a reference to art. 9 of the tripartite agreement of Dec. 13, 1906, between France, Italy and Britain.

3. See above, pp. 128-30.

which these districts would make under good government, but in the meantime it is premature to consider the Yabus line from this point of view." 1

But that was not the end of the "western railway". Throughout the following years the issue was kept alive, not so much out of a British desire to construct the railway as out of anxiety lest it be done so under the auspices of another power. What made this probable was the fact that the original concession for the French railway, which predated the 1906 agreement and envisaged its ultimate extension to the White Nile, was held by a French national, Chefneux, Minilik's former financial adviser. In 1913, a claim by Chefneux himself that the French railway company was considering extension of the line to Jimma provoked a flurry of British activity to persuade the French to accept their obligation under the 1906 agreement by dissociating themselves from any westward extension of the railway; the British sought to acquire an option on the concession or to purchase it outright. What they feared most was the construction of the western railway by a company ostensibly independent and Ethiopian but financially and technically dependent on the French. In the end, the threat of French involvement in the extension was considered too remote to justify the expenses of acquiring the concession, and the validity of the document itself was questioned.²

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1. FO 371/1294, A.R. (1911), encl. in Thesiger to Grey, 22.4.12.
 2. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 19.8.13.; Wingate's note on above, 26.9.13.; Kitchener to Grey, 19.10.13.; FO 371/1878, Thesiger to Grey, 6.12.13., 10.12.13.; Kitchener to Grey, 12.2.14.

In 1919, the Abyssinian Corporation considered the idea of acquiring the concession and then gave it up on the grounds that any westward extension from the capital was useless without extension of the Sennar line on the Sudanese side.¹ Gradually, too, British policy veered from railway construction in western Ethiopia in competition with the French to one of partnership with them in any further extension in return for a greater British share in the administration of the French railway. Stack stated what amounted to an epitaph on the "western railway" when he said: "I think it would be a mistake on our part to hold up any development of communication in Abyssinia, for the sake of a remote prospect of being able to direct such a development to our own ends."²

II. Posts and Telecommunications

Gambella's postal communication with Europe was largely through Addis Ababa, care of the Bank of Abyssinia. A weekly runner service linked Gore to the capital, with another service between Gore and Gambella. The bank was paid monthly subscriptions or a small fee per letter by those who availed themselves of its service. The time required for delivery between London and Gambella was about 37 days. In the "open" season, there was a travelling

1. FO 371/3499, Wolmer to FO, 18.9.19.; Abyssinian Corporation to FO, 6.11.19. The Sennar extension was achieved only in 1952 to Sinja and in 1953-4 to Roseires. Hill, Sudan Transport, p. 118.

2. FO 371/7149, Stack to Allenby, 21.3.22.

post on the steamers between Khartoum and Gambella.¹

saying: 'Providing some kind of direct postal communication between Gambella and the Sudan during the dry the ("closed") season remained an abiding concern. In 1904, Wilson, during his tour of Gambella and the environs, instituted what appeared to be an ingenious system. Earlier, Anyuua runners had connected Nasser and the trading post in the dry season. But as they had to traverse country inhabited by the Nuer, their traditional enemies, security was minimal and the service therefore precarious. Wilson tried to overcome this difficulty by arranging a system of postal exchange. Two postmen on mule back left Gambella on about the 14th of each month and met and exchanged mail with two other postmen starting from Nasser at about the same time. The exchange took place at Jikawo, which was presumably supposed to form the boundary between Anyuua and Nuer territory, on about the 17th of each month. The total time required for post to travel between Gambella and Tawfikia was scheduled to be about two weeks.²

The arrangement did not seem to fare very well in execution. Certainly by 1914 the service had been interrupted and Gambella's postal link was via Addis Ababa and Jibouti.³ In 1912, the Anyuua leader, Udial, who had defied the summons of the governor at Gore,⁴

1. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913; Sudan Handbook, p. 587.

2. SIR 126, Jan. 1905, app. A.

3. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913.

4. See above, p. 126.

stopped post runners passing through his district, saying: '"You are found in the middle and by this post which you send you bring the Abyssinians from up and the Europeans from down to fight us."' He later let them pass but threatened to throw the next mail into the river.¹ Towards the end of the decade, too, the virtual state of war in the Nuer country as the Gaajak resisted the Sudan government expeditions made postal communication practically impossible.² In April 1921, Anyuaa mail carriers were attacked by the Gaajak.³ Three years later, facilitated by the relatively more peaceful conditions in the Gaajak country, a canoe mail service started operating between Nasser and Gambella. The average time upstream was 14 days, the best record being 9 days.

A wireless station linking Gambella through Nasser with the Sudan telegraph system was installed in 1915 and provided a much more speedy communication with the Sudan. For years the only wireless station in Ethiopia, the controversy that raged around its construction is discussed in detail below. Minilik had realized the value of telephones in bolstering his authority over provincial governors and had given the setting up of a telephone network connecting the various parts of the empire considerable attention. Even keener

1. CRO Intel 2/25/198, mamur Gambella to govr. UNP, 26.4.12.

2. CRO Intel 1/14/62, report by Ratcliffe, inspector Gambella, 29.3.20.

3. SIR 321, Apr. 1921.

in exploiting the political advantages of telecommunications were the colonial powers. By 1900, the first telephone-telegraph line, linking the capital to the eastern commercial centre, Harar, and then to Jibouti had been completed by the French railway company. The Italians had also built an alternative northern line linking Addis Ababa and Asmara and then leading to Khartoum, Cairo, and Suez. The latter line was generally preferred because it was cheaper and faster.¹ In the west, Gore had been linked to the capital by 1907 and the line reached Gambella in 1910 via Bure and Sayo.² The service left much to be desired. Messages from Bure and Gore to Gambella had to go circuitously via Sayo. The line between Sayo and Gambella itself was "mostly on poles made of dead tree trunks and sometimes on growing trees", and there were frequent interruptions, especially during the rains.³ Between the capital and the western towns, messages had to be relayed along four or five stations. One traveller in 1911 noted that, while administratively useful, the poor telephone service had annoyed the merchants so much that they had dispensed

1. Pankhurst, p. 340; Garretson, p. 298.

2. Garretson, p. 299; SIR 192, July 1910. See Mahtama Sillasse Walda Masqal, Zikra Nagar (Addis Ababa, 1962 EC), pp. 491 ff., for places which had telephone links with the capital before 1935, and FO 371/16097, encl. in Murray to Peterson, 2.1.32., for a communications map of Ethiopia, 1931; cf. PRO MPK 351, "Abyssinian Telephone System", 10.6.19.

3. CRO Intel 1/13/61., Walker to Thesiger, 20.3.18.; DUR 294/3, Parker diary (July-Aug. 1918), p. 15.

with it altogether.¹

The initiative for what was eventually transmuted into the Gambella wireless station came from the Ethiopian side. In 1909, and again in 1911, the Ethiopian government expressed a desire to extend telegraphic communication through Gambella to the frontier. This assumed a similar extension from Tawfikia on the Sudanese side to ensure international communication. The Sudan government however made any such undertaking conditional on Ethiopia becoming a member of the International Telegraphic Convention, which again depended on the Ethiopian system of telecommunication being up to international standards. The Sudan government was not only sceptical of this but also unwilling to incur the hostility of the Italians by erecting a line which could compete with theirs. The financial benefit accruing from the Gambella line was also considered too negligible to cover the cost of telegraphic extension from Tawfikia to the frontier.²

In 1914, in the wake of political disturbances in Tigrai and tension between the Ethiopian government and the Italians in Eritrea,³ Liḥ Bayana, the Ethiopian minister of posts and telegraphs, again approached the

1. Montandon, pp. 318-9.

2. FO 371/821, Hervey to Grey, 9.12.09.; FO 371/1043, Gorst to Grey, 28.3.11.; DUR 301/6/1, dir. Posts & Telegraphs to priv. sec., 12.11.11.

3. FO 371/1880, FO minutes, 9.7.14.; Marcus, Life and Times, pp. 262-66.

British on the question of converting the telephone line from the capital to Gambella into a telegraphic one and then extending it to the Sudan frontier to connect with the extension from Tawfikia on the Sudanese side.

Simultaneously, negotiations were going on for the construction of a telephone-telegraph line from the capital independent of the Italian one to link with the Sudan telegraph system at Gallabat.¹ Lij Bayana wanted to have a telegraph office on the Ethiopian side quite apart from the Sudan terminal at Gallabat.² The Sudan government, while leaving all the expenses of construction to its Ethiopian counterpart, insisted on its operation by its own staff on the ground that Ethiopia was not yet a member of the International Telegraph Convention.³ The Foreign Office was not very much concerned about the Gallabat line and emphasized that all efforts should be directed to the more urgent Gambella connection.⁴ And it was the issue of the Gambella wireless station that soon developed into a source of tension among the colonial powers and of division within the Ethiopian government.

What gave the issue broader significance was

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1. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Butler to Cheetham, 11.7.14.
 2. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Thesiger to Doughty-Wylie, 28.5.15.
 3. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Wingate to Doughty-Wylie, 3.1.15.
 4. FO 371/1880, minutes on Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 7.5.14.; FO minutes, 9.7.14. Little seems to have come out of the negotiations on the Gondar-Matamma line; there was no telephone link between the two towns as late as 1931: See map in FO 371/1880, encl. in Murray to Peterson, 2.1.32.

the rival politics of the German and British legations in Addis Ababa which attained even greater intensity with the outbreak of the war in August 1914. The wireless station project was pushed forward by the British legation, more out of political considerations than because of the growth in Gambella trade it could possibly bring about.¹ The ambivalent position of Italy in the impending world war apparently urged on the British the need to develop an independent line of communication.² What was therefore regarded with hesitation a few years before now became a matter of absolute necessity. Early in August, ignoring Wingate's characteristic fears of the burden on "the impoverished Sudan Government" that the project would entail,³ and without the necessary written consent from the Ethiopian authorities, Doughty-Wylie telegraphed to Khartoum to proceed with the erection of the apparatus in all possible speed.⁴

The most interesting aspect of the whole affair was the way in which what was in origin an Ethiopian government initiative was taken up by the British and executed in the face of strong Ethiopian opposition both in the capital and locally in Gambella. In July 1914, the Ethiopian government was considering the installation of a wireless station at Gambella to link with Nasser and

1. See CRO Intel 1/6/26, Doughty-Wylie to acting GG, 19.6.14.

2. FO 371/1880, FO minutes, 6.7.14.

3. FO 371/1880, Wingate to Langley, 29.7.14.

4. FO 371/1880, Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 8.8.14.; FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Wingate, 1.8.15.

Tawfikia. It was prepared to pay the cost of the installation and the salaries of the supervising staff, and the British were only hoping that they would be allowed to provide the staff.¹ A month later, they had proceeded to instal the wireless station almost unilaterally. In the capital, the main opposition to the British action came from what they preferred to call the pro-German party, notably Lij Bayana, formerly minister of posts and telegraphs and later foreign minister. In Gambella, Majid Abud was making his debut as the unfaltering opponent of British encroachment in western Ethiopia. Twice in July, 1915, he wrote to the mamur at Gambella asking him "to kindly stop the work" of building "a Marconi Telegraph" until permission was given by the central government.² It was at this time too that Majid objected to the engineer getting pebbles from the conical hill on the northern boundary of the enclave, claiming that the hill lay outside the enclave.³ The Sudan government officials tried to reciprocate by asking Majid why he passed through the enclave daily with an armed escort. Majid retorted that that was unavoidable as the enclave lay between his place of residence and his place of work. The chief argument of the Sudan officials however was that Majid had as little right to interfere in operations inside the enclave such as the

1. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Butler to Cheetham, 11.7.14.

2. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Majid to mamur, 25.7.15., 31.7.15.

3. See above, p. 258.

installation of the wireless station as a landlord had inside the house of his tenant - an argument which echoed the line that the British minister himself adopted in the capital. All the same, they fumed at what they regarded as an "impertinence" on the part of Majid and queried if it would be too much to ask for his removal. Eventually, though, they managed to strike a slight note of cordiality: Majid let the engineer fetch pebbles from the hill, and, after the completion of the station, he was invited to visit the apparatus, which he did in state.¹

Although Majid had no particular love for the British, his action in the wireless station case seems to have been largely dictated by his superiors, and he repeatedly emphasized this point. Apparently, he had orders from Dajach Ganame, the governor of Gore, to stop work on the installation.² The Sudan officials on the other hand maintained that they could only stop work if they were ordered to do so by their government.³ An official order to such effect was indeed sent in mid-September, but it arrived after the completion of the station.⁴ Presumably to avoid further difficulties, it was kept closed for some time.⁵

1. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Trench to Muwasalat, 16.9.15.; Trench to govr. UNP, 26.9.15.; FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Wingate, 1.8.15.

2. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Trench to govr. UNP, 26.9.15.

3. Ibid.

4. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, 15.9.15., 20.9.15.

5. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, 20.9.15.; CRO Intel 1/6/26, Trench to Muwasalat, 24.9.15.

When challenged by the Ethiopian authorities that the station was a unilateral British act and hence a violation of Ethiopian sovereignty, Thesiger argued not only that there was nothing in the 1902 treaty that prohibited the construction of a wireless station "for commercial purposes" but also that efficient and speedy communication between Gambella and Sudan stations was made imperative by the increased volume of trade.¹ In fact, in the preceding three seasons, Gambella trade had been declining.² Indeed, the commercial argument for the station was scarcely anything more than a convenient ploy. In essence, it was a political affair, and it was as such that Lij Bayana, who led the Ethiopian opposition to the installation of the apparatus, understood it. He argued that the enclave was leased to the British for commercial purposes only, not for political and military ones.³ In contrast, Bitwadam (formerly Nagadras) Hayla Giyorgis, president of the council of ministers and Iyasu's right hand man, and Fitawrari Habta Giyorgis, the veteran war minister, were much more sympathetic to the British cause. Thesiger reported that when Hayla Giyorgis heard that the station had been completed before the order to suspend work reached Gambella, he took it "good-naturedly and could not help laughing".⁴ The only request that

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Wingate, 1.8.15.

2. See CEB, A.R., 1913, 1914, 1915.

3. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Wingate, 31.8.15.

4. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Wingate, 20.9.15.

Hayla Giyorgis made was that work on the project be temporarily stopped until the matter was referred to Iyasu. Thesiger at first ruled this out saying that any such delay would mean serious injury to British trade in view of the severe competition it would face from the French railway, which was then approaching completion. He even went further and argued that the Ethiopian authorities were favouring French and Italian commerce to the detriment of the British, as the former two had telegraphic communication with their adjacent colonies while British efforts to establish such a connection were being frustrated. In a much more arrogant vein, he accused Bayana of insulting the Sudan government by sending "a second class Arab trader [i.e. Majid] to give orders in Sudan territory to Sudan officials employed in Sudan Government work".¹

Thesiger did not entirely rule out French and Italian duplicity in the matter, either, in view of the rivalry to their interests that the Gambella wireless station was expected to pose.² But the chief culprits according to British reason, were the Germans, who were believed to have masterminded Bayana's opposition.³ The

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Wingate, 31.8.15. Emphasis added; whether Gambella was to be regarded as Sudan or Ethiopian territory was precisely the issue. Cf. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Wingate, 4.10.15.

2. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Wingate, 23.12.15.

3. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, 7.9.15.; Borghese to Clerk, 10.9.15.

German legation did make a formal protest to the Ethiopian government that permission for the construction of the station would be regarded "as a most unfriendly act".¹ Reports of German victories in Russia were also claimed to have given fresh impetus to the opposition of the "pro-German" party to the scheme.² But, although the Germans, like the Turks, evidently enjoyed a favourable position under Iyasu, Ethiopian opposition to the scheme is better seen as an episode in the whole question of the status of the enclave that began with Iyasu and reached a high point in the 20s.³

Once the wireless station was completed, the two parties in the Ethiopian government reacted as differently as they had from the start. Bayana's party urged the government to send instructions to destroy the apparatus. Hayla Giyorgis and Habta Giyorgis, whose "moderation and good sense" prevailed in the council of ministers, tried to purchase it as a face-saving device after their collaboration with the British.⁴ Thesiger too was aware of this and tried to dangle the prospect of eventual Ethiopian purchase of the apparatus before the eyes of the two ministers. Beginning early in August, 1915, he repeatedly sought authorization to

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Wingate, 4.10.15.

2. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, 5.8.15.; Thesiger to Wingate, 1.8.15.

3. See above, Ch. 4.

4. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Thesiger to Wingate, 4.10.15.; FO 371/2228, Langley to Thesiger, 8.10.15.

assure them that the Sudan government would consider giving its Ethiopian counterpart management of the station as soon as the telephone line between Addis Ababa and Gambella was converted into a telegraphic one and on payment of the cost of the installation and the salaries of the British operators, and provided that the British retained the right of supervision.¹ At the same time, the technical difficulties of Ethiopian administration of the station was being pointed out from the Sudan. Not only was the apparatus deemed beyond Ethiopian technical competence, but it was also argued that Ethiopia should first be a member of the International Telegraph Union before it could administer a wireless station like the Gambella one.²

As soon as it was completed, Hayla Giyorgis insisted on immediate sale of the apparatus to the Ethiopian government. Thesiger refused and justified this to Wingate by claiming that it would induce the Ethiopian government to speed up the conversion of the Addis-Gambella telephone line "into an effective telegraph line with proper staff, offices, and apparatus". The additional conditions that the British minister envisaged for the sale of the apparatus to Ethiopia included the appointment and supervision of the operators and telegraphists by the Sudan government (while they were to get their salaries from the Ethiopian), the appointment at

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Wingate, 1.8.15., 9.8.15., 31.8.15., 4.9.15.

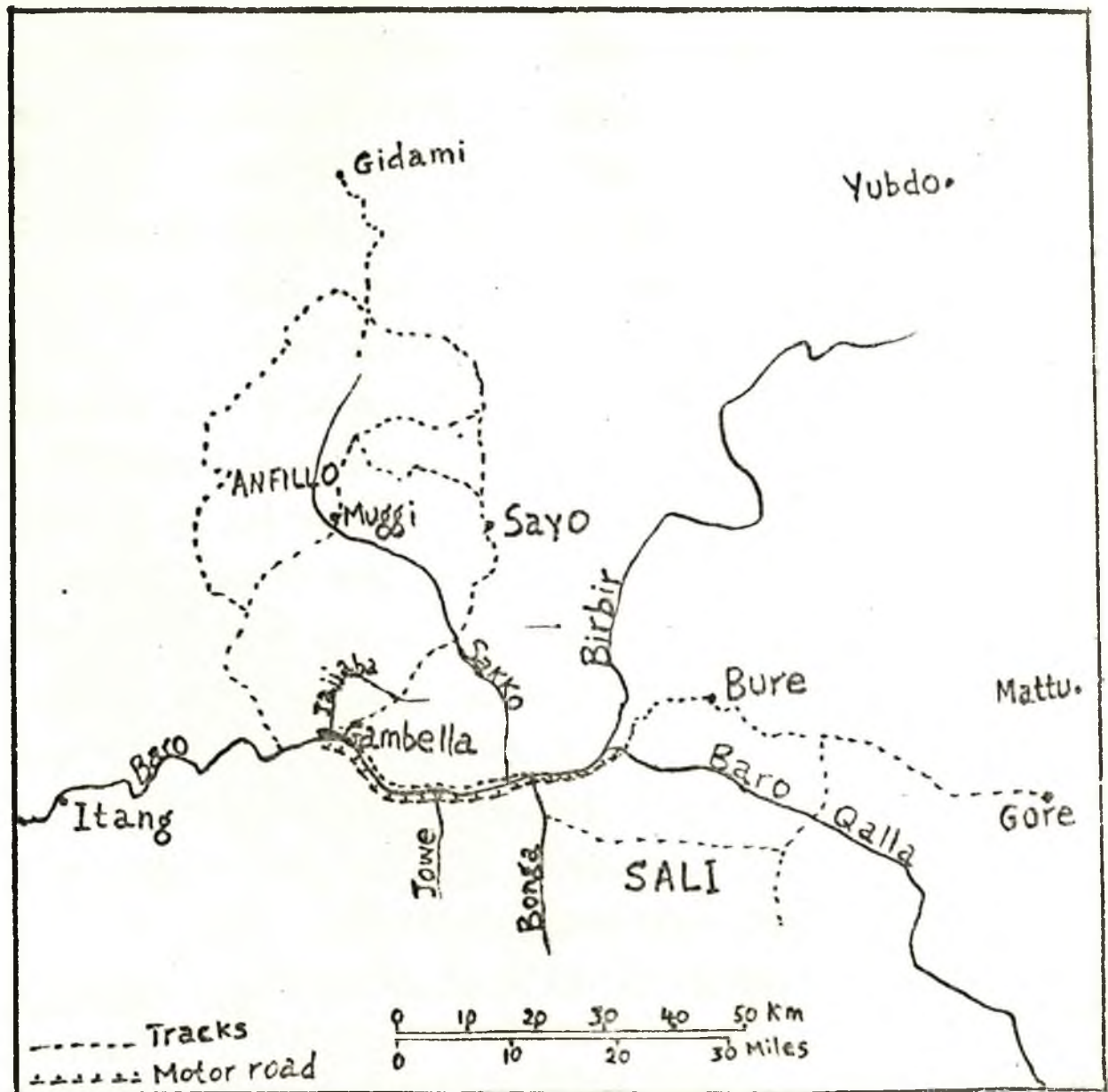
2. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Moir to priv. sec., 3.9.15.

Ethiopian government expense of an Egyptian operator with a knowledge of French to work the land line linking Gambella with Addis Ababa, and the sole right of the Sudan to supply the necessary machinery and staff if and when the Ethiopian government decided to set up a wireless station in the capital to link with Gambella.¹ Hayla Giyorgis' insistence verged on desperation as the accusation grew that he had so lightly surrendered Ethiopian sovereignty by allowing the installation of the apparatus. He demanded the unconditional sale of the apparatus.² Although Wingate seemed ready to face the prospect of unconditional sale,³ Thesiger set himself adamantly against it and eventually struck a clever formula whereby the Sudan government made a general commitment to sell the apparatus at cost price and expressed their readiness to supply the necessary staff to work it, their salaries being paid by the Ethiopian government.⁴ That more or less sealed the fate of the Gambella wireless station; it remained completely in British hands, and no claims on it were made by the Ethiopian government thereafter.

III. Routes and Transport

In the final analysis, it was Gambella's links

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1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Wingate, 20.9.15.
 2. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Wingate, 23.12.15., 30.12.15.
 3. CRO Intel 1/6/26, Wingate to Thesiger, 5.2.16.
 4. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Wingate, 20.1.16.; CRO Intel 1/6/26, Thesiger to Wingate, 20.1.16.



3. Gambella Trade Routes

with the plateau that were of greater significance than those with the Sudan, as the commercial produce lay in the former and the problems were more fundamental. Much more effort was thus spent in trying to improve communication and transport between Gambella and the plateau. Two main routes led from the trading post: one connecting it with Sayo in the northeast and the other with Bure and Gore in the east. The Sayo route was shorter and crossed only one important river, the Sakko, while the Bure one had to cross the Baro and the Baro Qalla as well. An escarpment sharply rising to about 1000 ft. lay at the approach to each centre. Another, less frequented, route went down from Gidami through the coffee-rich district of Anfillo, west of Sayo, to the enclave. Although the gradient was easier and the need for bridges less than on either the Sayo or the Bure route, the Anfillo route was not as important as either of the other two.¹ A fourth route leading to the Sali region in the south and thence to Gimira and Kafa had been closed by a local nagadras by 1911 and remained of only potential significance.²

1. SIR 201, Apr. 1911, app. A.; FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09. In 1904, Wilson, during his tour of Gambella and the surrounding region, described two branches of the Anfillo road striking the Baro at some six and twelve miles downstream from Gambella. He suggested that the road could go direct to the trading post; this seems to have been the case by 1911, SIR 126, Jan. 1905, app. A.

2. As Newcombe observed, "A genuine capitalist would have a large field before him; opening the Salei road south of the Baro should pay anyone if he secured the Kaffa trade." SIR 201, Apr. 1911, app. A. About half the wax that came to Addis in 1909 reportedly originated in Kafa. Attempts were made later to revive and develop this route, without much success.

The Bure-Gambella route, which was said to take up to three days, remained the most important throughout the period. In 1911, there was an attempt to develop the Sayo route at the expense of the Bure-Gore one. Newcombe, sent to survey the possible lines of developing communications between Gambella and the plateau, recommended the Sayo route as the cheapest for all the trade north of the Baro. The distance was shorter, about a day, and hence the hazard to animals and porters less; the portage rate was half that charged between Bure and Gambella. Only one major river, the Sakko, needed bridging on the Sayo route, whereas the Bure-Gambella track involved crossing the Baro twice - once by a dug-out canoe and then across a precarious rope bridge. Moreover, Newcombe argued, the Sayo route provided, once the Birbir was bridged, a much cheaper outlet for produce from Soddo, some forty miles to the north of Gore. Less convincingly, he maintained that it would even be cheaper to transport goods from Gore via Sayo than via Bure. The Sali trade south of the Baro could also be directed along an independent route along the Bonga river instead of feeding into Bure trade, as it apparently did at the time. It was altogether a scheme which would have spelt the end of Bure as a commercial centre. The only inconvenience that Newcombe saw in the Sayo route was the kella charges, which were more numerous and more exacting than the ones on the Bure route.¹ But there was the more important question of whether Gore governors

1. SIR 201, Apr. 1911, app. A.

would so lightly condone an arrangement which would benefit their rivals in Sayo at their expense. Probably for this reason, the scheme was not pushed seriously and the primacy of the Bure route continued.

What both routes clearly needed was bridging of rivers, clearing of paths and grading of escarpments. To these tasks the British, and their consul in Gore in particular, applied themselves with a perseverance and enthusiasm that could not fail to arouse Ethiopian suspicion as to their motives. In 1908, Captain Bramly, during his abortive mission to Ethiopia, gave a graphic description of his crossing on the rope bridge over the Baro Qalla:

"when I crossed 5 yards were under water where it sagged in the middle, and the current is so strong that it hurls the part in the water up and down to such an extent that it was only with the greatest difficulty I got across, soaked from head to foot, having to cling with both hands to the side creepers. Nevertheless,"

he added significantly, "I cannot see how the Sudan Government can make roads and build bridges in Abyssinian territory."¹ Another visitor to the area a year later recommended that, as the Sudan government was liable to suspicion, the necessary bridges between Bure and Gambella should be built by private merchants who would then get a refund from the government.² Other British officials were less inhibited about the responsibility of the Sudan

1. SIR 168, July 1908, app. C.

2. SIR 179, June 1909.

government in this respect.

Ras Tassamma himself showed interest in improving communications in cooperation with the Sudan. He volunteered to make labour and local material available for the building of a suspension bridge over the Baro Qalla if the Sudan government would provide the wire rope and the engineer. He was also willing to open the road along the left bank of the Baro. Further, he asked for assistance in clearing the road from Gore to Addis Ababa and building bridges or establishing ferries at the major rivers en route - Gibe, Didessa, Dabana, Gabba, and Sor.¹ The Foreign Office urged Khartoum through Cairo to seize such a splendid opportunity and take advantage of the "friendly disposition" of the Ethiopian authorities and send an engineer.² Khartoum accordingly approved a credit of £E400 for the construction of the Baro Qalla bridge and Captain Newcombe was sent for the purpose.³ Thesiger could not help observing somewhat gleefully: "If we get as we shall now the Addis Ababa to Gambela road opened properly and the rivers bridged, we can secure all the trade from the trade which is the most important."⁴ Wingate was sharp enough to perceive the double-edged nature of developing communications between Gambella and

1. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Thesiger to Phipps, 16.8.10.

2. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Langley to Gorst, 10.11.10.

3. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Wingate to Thesiger, 28.11.10.;
FO 867/1, minutes of the GG Council, 16.11.10.

4. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Thesiger to FO, 3.12.10.

Addis Ababa. He confided his doubts thus:

bridges, it "There is one question which presents itself to my mind and that is whether the construction of roads beyond such as will afford reasonable access from Gambela to the top of the plateau would be advisable in the interest of the Sudan Transit Trade, as [it would be] tending to enable produce to be exported with greater facilities via the Eastern route when the railway is completed as far as Adis Abeba." 1

As it turned out, even improving communications between Gambella and Bure was not to be an easy task.

While Wingate was pondering the advisability of facilitating Gambella's links with Addis Ababa, Tassamma had already telephoned to his representatives in the west to refuse the construction of the Baro Qalla bridge.²

Thesiger suspected pressure from both the French, who feared competition with the railway, and the Germans, "who have bought Igazu", the Ethiopian minister of foreign affairs and commerce, who was supposed to have "terrorized" Tassamma into going back on his earlier commitment.³

Newcombe, while pointing out Tassamma's apprehension of a possible British invasion from the Sudan, also strongly sensed as an additional factor against bridge construction the merchant Timoleon, who had managed to acquire considerable influence over the Ethiopian officials in charge of the old bridges and ferries through bribes and did not want any change in the status quo.⁴

1. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Wingate to Thesiger, 26.1.11.

2. CRO Intel 2/24/193, govr. UNP to ADI, 21.1.11.

3. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Thesiger to Doughty-Wylie, 18.1.11.

4. CRO Intel 2/24/194, Newcombe to dir. Sudan Railways, 26.1.11.

the ~~engine~~ When Tassamma did authorize the building of bridges, it was over the Birbir and Sor - the latter some ten miles northeast of Gore - rather than the Baro Qalla and Sakko bridges that the British had requested.¹ In March 1911, Newcombe presented an estimate of the cost of building four suspension bridges over the Sakko, Birbir, Baro Qalla, and Bonga rivers. This came to a total of £260, with the longest bridge over the Birbir (120ft. span) costing £120.² The low estimate of the cost seemed to reassure the Ethiopian ministers, whose fear of a possible British invasion had led them to assume costly and elaborate structures.³ On August 11, Nagadras Halya Giyorgis, who had succeeded Yigazu as minister of foreign affairs and commerce after he was imprisoned by Iyasu⁴ and who had come to the forefront of the political stage after the death of Tassamma in April, informed Doughty-Wylie, the British chargé d'affaires, that he might order the material for the bridges and that the Ethiopian government would defray the expenses.⁵

Work on the bridges did not start until the summer of the following year. But by August, the construction of the Baro Qalla bridge was reportedly progressing well, with the Sudan providing the material and

1. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Thesiger to Doughty-Wylie, 19.1.11.

2. SIR 201, Apr. 1911, app. A.

3. FO 371/1044, Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 10.8.11.

4. Marcus, Life and Times, p. 254.

5. FO 371/1044, Hayla Giyorgis to Doughty-Wylie, 11.8.11.; FO 867/3, minutes of the GG Council, 21.4.12.; FO 371/19189, memo on Gambella, 6.3.35.

the engineer and Dajach Kabada conscripting the labour.¹ It was, as one Sudan government official put it, "unmitigated corvée of the worst description". Porters on their way between Gambella and the plateau were made to throw down their loads and do a few hours' work on the bridge before they resumed their journey.² The bridge was completed by the end of the year.³ The other bridges meanwhile had become a matter of controversy and indecision. To begin with, the British themselves were divided as to which bridge to build, the Bonga or the Sakko, although Hayla Giyorgis' authorization had covered both. Kelly and Walker gave priority to the Bonga over the Sakko, arguing that the existing Sakko bridge was sufficient for the purposes of the less significant Sayo trade, whereas a bridge over the Bonga - with a Sudan government ferry across the Baro at Gambella instead of the dug-out ferry some 25 miles upstream - would facilitate donkey transport and expand the Bure trade.⁴ The British chargé d'affaires in Addis Ababa adduced on the other hand a number of arguments as to why the Sakko bridge should not be abandoned in favour of the Bonga one. To do so would mean a blow to Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis, "the only man in Abyssinia who can be used in trade questions"; as ruler of Sayo

1. SIR 215, June 1912; DUR 182/2/2, Kelly to Wingate, 10.8.12.

2. DUR 182/2/2, Kelly to Wingate, 10.8.12.

3. FO 371/1571, encl. in Thesiger to Grey, 20.1.13.

4. DUR 182/2/2, Kelly to Wingate, 10.8.12.; SIR 217, Aug. 1912.

and Gidami during Jote's imprisonment, the nagadras had developed a stake in Sayo trade.¹ Sayo trade, though less important than Bure trade, could be developed and the Sayo route had the natural advantage of shorter donkey transport and less tsetse fly. A bridge over the Bonga, beside necessitating a new site and ferry service from the bank opposite the enclave, would also antagonize the Bonga Anyuaa, who were reputed to get some £100 (yearly?) by providing canoe transport across the Baro at this junction.²

More important in delaying the construction of the bridges was the growing Ethiopian suspicion of British intentions. British pressure for bridge construction coincided with punitive expeditions to the Anyuaa and the Gila reconnaissance. There was therefore justifiable apprehension on the Ethiopian side; there was even a strong rumour of an impending British invasion from the Sudan.³ Thesiger tried to reassure Iyasu by telling him that the British could not possibly invade Ethiopia by the Gambella route as the terrain was inhospitable to man and beast alike, that they had enough territory and problems without adding Ethiopia, and that in any case they did not have the forces to invade Ethiopia even if they wished to. Iyasu appeared to have been somewhat swayed by the minister's argument and had instructions

1. CRO Intel 1/13/58, Doughty-Wylie to Clayton, 29.9.12.

2. Ibid.; DUR 122/3, Clayton to Wingate, 12.9.12.

3. See above, pp. 128-30.

written for the construction of the Bonga bridge; he even expressed a desire to visit the Sudan.¹ A few weeks later, he regretted his decision as he was assailed by fresh doubts as to British motives; Kabada had by then received his orders to assist in the construction of the bridges.²

Locally, Iyasu's slaving raids of 1912 in the southwest and west, coupled with Kabada's exactions, had caused labour shortage as the Anyuua fled in fear or resentment.³ Further, there developed an alliance between Bure officials and the leading trading firm in the region, Gerolimato Bros., since both parties found their interests threatened by the Bonga bridge and the grading of the Guma escarpment that the British also sought. The Bure officials saw in the Sudan-controlled ferry service at Gambella that the Bonga bridge implied a danger to the existing ferry upstream which they controlled, if only precariously. Gerolimato's opposition allegedly stemmed from a general fear of competition that improvement of communications would entail.⁴ In Addis Ababa, the Germans were said to have been infuriated by the completion of the Baro Qalla bridge, and the British characteristically ascribed Ethiopian opposition to the construction of the Bonga bridge to German instigation.⁵ Nevertheless, the

1. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 21.2.13.

2. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 11.3.13.

3. FO 371/1571, encl. in Thesiger to Grey, 20.1.13.

4. CRO Intel 1/12/55, Walker to Thesiger, 13.3.13.; CRO Intel 1/13/59, Walker to govr. UNP, 1.6.13.

5. CRO Intel 1/13/59, Walker to govr. UNP, 1.6.13.

bridge had been completed by June 1913. Although it was a wooden structure instead of the wire rope one that had been planned, the cost of the two bridges was said to have risen from the initial estimate of £100 to a staggering sum of £1150. The Ethiopian authorities were judged guilty of the obstruction and delay which was said to have caused the high cost and were asked to pay from their share of the Gambella customs, which had been kept in Khartoum in convenient captivity.¹

While the bridges must have facilitated communication to some degree, there was one problem which remained a chronic one in the life of the trading post, i.e. the question of animal transport. The prevalence of the tsetse fly in the plains made this a hazardous, if not altogether impossible, exercise.² The use of animals was thus largely limited to the plateau stretch of the routes, and particularly between Gore and Bure.³ A mule could carry 6 farasula (222 lbs.), and the rate between Gore and Bure was 3 dollars in 1909.⁴ From Soddo to Bure or Sayo was 5 dollars in 1911.⁵ But there does not seem to have been a standard rate: one informant who himself engaged in mule transport between Gore and Bure suggested a range as wide as 2 to 10 dollars.⁶

1. Ibid.; FO 371/1571, Thesiger to acting GG, 3.9.13.; FO 371/19189, memo on Gambella, 6.3.35.

2. B.S., 11.10.26.; FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09.

3. O.I. (Taye).

4. FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09.

5. SIR 201, Apr. 1911, app. A.

6. O.I. (Makurya).

After some grading work was done on the Guma escarpment, mule transport was extended from Bure down to Baro Qalla.¹ But the strain of descending the escarpment took a huge toll of the animals.² Those mules and donkeys that did venture to Gambella could rarely make the trip more than once. Even mules, generally more resistant than donkeys to the tsetse fly, reportedly could manage a maximum only of ten trips before they succumbed to the disease, locally known as gandi, and died.³ Dr. Lambie, one of the earliest Christian missionaries in western Ethiopia, passing through what he called the "valley of dried bones" at the bottom of the escarpment on the Sayo-Gambella route, saw it littered with the bones of dead animals and porters. He gave a touching description of the donkeys "struggling uphill with immense loads of cloth or salt, some of them with glazed eyes, hardly able to move, their cruel owners lashing them to get the last ounce of strength from their poor little bodies before they lay down, never to rise".⁴

The chief means of transport in the plains thus remained human portage. The porters were either Oromo or Anyuua and were known on the plateau as kukurse.⁵ The load varied from $1\frac{1}{2}$ farasula ($55\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.) to 2 farasula (74 lbs.).⁶ As noted earlier, the charges were cheaper

1. A&P, vol. 46 (1912-13), C.R., Gambella, 1911.

2. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913.

3. There were some local medicines: Shinfa, ground seed mixed with water, and jargada, a salty rock. Birhanu, pp. 61 ff.

4. Boot and Saddle in Africa (New York, 1943), p. 30.

5. O.I. (Makurya).

6. O.I. (Tafari & Taye); SIR 201, Apr. 1911, app. A.;
/Continued over

on the Sayo route - 1 dollar per load as compared to about 2 dollars on the Bure route - because the distance was shorter. Rates varied seasonally and could go up to 2 dollars on the Sayo and 4 on the Bure routes during the rains, i.e. between June and September.¹ One report in 1911, however, gave 1 dollar as the rate on the Sayo route during the rains, falling to 1/2 a dollar when the rains stopped and the grass was down.²

In 1911, Newcombe, after his visit to the trading post and the surrounding areas, complained that the portage charges were too high, as the average local wage for a worker, he claimed, was 2 to 3 dollars a month. He was also dismayed by the merchants whose competition inflated the rates.³ But such a mechanical comparison of a supposed monthly average wage and what the porters charged ignored the perilous nature of their job. Many of them died of fever and the sheer arduousness of descending and ascending the escarpment. To avoid the strain of lifting again and again, porters were said to have

Footnote 6 continued from previous page.

FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09. The 1911 trade report for Gambella gives 84 lbs for the Sayo-Gambella route and 75 lbs for the Bure-Gambella route, A&P, vol. 46 (1912-13).

1. CRO Intel 2/24/190, acting mamur Gambella to govr. UNP, 24.3.08.; SIR 201, Apr. 1911, app. A.; A&P, vol. 46 (1912-13), C.R., Gambella, 1911.
2. FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09.
3. SIR 201, Apr. 1911, app. A.; Cf. CRO Intel 2/24/194, Newcombe to dir. Sudan Railways, 26.1.11.; CRO Intel 2/24/190, acting mamur Gambella to govr. UNP, 24.3.08.; A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Gambella, 1913.

carried their loads non-stop over long stretches of the journey.¹ According to a 1922 report: that, short of

"By the end of June nearly all transport animals - mules, donkeys and camels, are dead - the porters go sick and are not at all keen to make the journey to Gambella - The roads during the rains are the natural water courses - the porters are wet through day after day, without of course any change of clothing, and it is little wonder that many go sick, and that the rate of mortality is high." 2

While the porters, as Newcombe suggested, may have occasionally benefited from the competition of the large-scale drawing of the peasants into portersage put on merchants, there were many more cases of the Greek merchants robbing the porters of their rightful earnings. A porter would carry an unweighed load and when he reached the destination, the merchant would complain that it was some pounds short of what the porter had been given initially and deprive him of practically all his earning.

The notoriety of the Greek traders was such that Sudan government authorities at one time considered threatening them with loss of their trading licences if they continued their nefarious practices. Of much more serious concern to Khartoum than the well-being of the porters was the feeling that the conduct of the merchants was damaging to British prestige, as "the Abyssinians do not draw any distinction between different kinds of Europeans, but count British or Greeks as all the same".³

1. Birhanu, p. 63.

2. CRO Intel 1/14/65, Marsh report for period 15.9.21-30.9.22, 4.11.22.

3. CRO Intel 1/13/61, ADI to civ. sec., 1.11.17.

What gave portelage special significance in the economic life of western Ethiopia was that, short of engaging in trade, it was the only means of getting cash. It therefore tended to attract the peasantry. Some of the peasants were forced to engage in portelage by the demand of their malkaṇṇa (tribute-collectors) for payment of tribute in cash; others were attracted to the job by the need for cash to buy such items as clothing.¹

Dajach Nadaw, arguing the need for motor traffic between Bure and Gambella, complained about the drain that the large-scale drawing of the peasants into portelage put on agricultural production.² In 1929, Birhanina Salam hailed the news of the formation of the Ethiopian Motor Transport Company to build the Bure-Gambella road because it would mean not only the end of the perishing of numerous porters and pack-animals but also the return of porters to agriculture.³

On the understanding that porters were too expensive, the British began to seek cheaper forms of transport. In 1911, Newcombe recommended that the newly established Gore branch of the Bank of Abyssinia induce local merchants to form a company for animal transport between the plateau and Gambella. Such an undertaking was expected to effect a 50% reduction in transport costs. Such a company or an individual could also be given a

1. Birhanu, p. 63; B.S., 15.11.34.; FO 371/9986, Russell to Curzon, 22.12.23.

2. FO 371/9986, Russell to Curzon, 22.12.23.

3. B.S., 28.2.29.

repairing bridges. But he went about doing this with a concession to maintain the road and bridges in return for fees on loads.¹ Three years later, Walker was placing his hope for the future of Gambella trade on the formation of a motor traction company by the Bank of Abyssinia to establish mechanical transport between Bure and Gambella, with subsequent extension to the mouth of the Adura river, 50 miles downstream from Gambella; such an extension would also enable year-round communication with the Sudan. Walker estimated the necessary capital at 600,000 dollars; a quarter of the shares was to be acquired by the Ethiopian government in return for granting the concession.² His enthusiasm for the project was such that he tried to buy the cooperation of Dajach Ganame, the Gore governor, by sending him a "present", adding that "It is worth spending a few pounds to get this road made."³ When Gilo, head of the Bonga Anyuaa, refused to have the road on the south bank of the Baro cleared for fear of being held responsible for any goods stolen or porters molested, Walker thought he found further confirmation of his belief that the only solution was mechanical transport, "which is not so easily scared as Galla donkey-men and porters".⁴

His grandiose scheme frustrated, Walker fell on the less ambitious task of clearing local roads and

1. SIR 201, Apr. 1911, app. A.

2. CRO Intel 2/25/200, Walker to Doughty-Wylie, 14.5.14.; SIR 239, June 1914.

3. CRO Intel 2/25/200, Walker to civ. sec., 4.7.14.

4. CRO Intel 2/25/200, Walker to Doughty-Wylie, 25.7.14.

repairing bridges. But he went about doing this with a mixture of feverish haste and amateurishness which resulted in considerable waste of money and energy. The Bonga bridge was burnt by the Anyuaa before even a year elapsed after its completion.¹ But Walker devoted more of his attention to maintaining the Baro Qalla bridge. Soon, he developed another obsession: a bridge over the Birbir that would have made both the Baro Qalla bridge and the ferry across the Baro redundant. Further, he saw the Birbir bridge as a great step forward in the construction of the Bure-Gambella road; the latter was necessary to provide cheaper transport, without which, he argued, "Gambella cannot develop".² He put the blame for the obstacles to road building on "a small minority of [Ethiopian] officials" who "regard Gambela as an unfortunate concession which they would wish to recall. Until this body of obstruction can be overcome, I fear that Gambela must struggle along in spite of it and live in the old primitive groove".³

A bridge had been constructed over the Birbir earlier in 1916, and the distance between Bure and Sayo is said to have taken four hours less as a result.⁴ Now, Walker tried to build a much more imposing structure. At a cost of about 5000 dollars and with the help of some

1. CRO Intel 2/25/200, Walker to civ. sec., 3.3.14.

2. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to Dodds, 24.6.20.

3. Ibid.; Cf. Walker to Dodds, 3.12.20.

4. FO 371/9985, Walker to Thesiger, 4.6.16.

180 Oromo workmen, he built a timber bridge over the Birbir (80 metres wide). The work, which was completed on 7 May 1921, took 50 days, and the cost was entirely borne by Dajach Nadaw, the new governor of Gore. But the bridge proved as short-lived as it was imposing. Anyuaa ferrymen, whose livelihood was threatened by the new structure, did some damage to the causeways as soon as it was finished. Subsequently, floods washed away the whole edifice.¹ Undaunted by this setback and/ because unaffected by the huge cost involved, Walker contemplated making a second attempt in 1924; he hoped to utilize the "experience gained in 1921 at the cost of Ras Nado" by stationing soldiers at the bridge to prevent another attack by the Anyuaa and by completing the work well before the rains to avoid the danger of flooding before the structure had solidified. But the necessary funds were not forthcoming.²

Indeed, Walker's road-clearing and bridge-building exercise had an air of futility about it, not only because of the fragility of the structures he built and the impermanence of the paths he cleared, but also because his repeated requests for financial assistance went unheeded in both Khartoum and Addis Ababa. Yet it remained an enduring preoccupation, with the consul. If there were two things with which the consulate could most readily be identified, they were roads and bridges. Appropriately enough, Walker mused on the prospects of

1. SMIR 324, July 1921, app. C.; SMIR 334, May 1922.

2. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Bullock, 10.9.24.

life for his successor as he prepared to retire in 1928 thus: "I sometimes wonder what he will find to do, if he is unable to interest himself in roads and communications."¹

Yet the picture of the consul waging a lone-some crusade against obstruction and indifference is not altogether accurate. In Dajach (later Ras) Nadaw, he found an equally enthusiastic partner. In fact, much of the initiative for improving communications in Gore province seems to have come from the governor.² Walker once described him as "the only progressive Abyssinian".³ Gore informants are uniformly lyrical about the relatively progressive rule of Nadaw and in particular his road-building zeal. "Civilization" came to Gore, they say, at the time of Nadaw; no other governor did even a quarter of what he did for Gore, they add. He is credited with having the Sor and Gabba bridges built.⁴ The customary fine that he imposed on the guilty was the fetching of stones for paving roads.⁵ The paved streets of Gore are current testimony to this feat of engineering, while the loose pebbles, jocularly known as Nadaw's bombs, have provided ready ammunition for students in recent demonstrations.

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1. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, Walker to MacMichael, 20.2.28.
 2. CRO Intel 1/14/62, Walker to Dodds, 25.9.20.; O.I. (Makurya).
 3. FO 371/19189, memo on Gambella, 6.3.35.
 4. B.S., 12.10.27.; O.I. (Tafari).
 5. O.I. (Taye, Tafari, Makurya, Kasahun).

IV. The Bure-Gambella Road and the Ethiopian Motor Transport Company

Probably the most important project that was considered with regard to the improvement of transport and communication facilities was the clearing of a motor road between Gambella and Bure, the centre of the coffee trade, and the institution of motor traffic between the two towns. The project went some way towards realization, for by the end of the period a motor road had been cleared between Baro Qalla and Gambella. It was an idea that attracted not only the Gore consulate and the British legation in Addis Ababa, but also commercial companies and concessionaires. As early as 1913, Thesiger was toying with the idea of obtaining from Iyasu a concession for motor traffic between Bure and Gambella.¹ Walker had an even more abiding concern with the project and was personally involved with it to the point of obstructing undertakings by bodies with better financial standing. His successor, Erskine (1928-37), inherited the same ambivalent attitude towards big business and its intrusion into what he no doubt regarded as his exclusive zone of influence.

Walker's plan for building the road was for a joint undertaking by him and Dajach Nadaw, with authorization and financial backing from Addis Ababa and possible technical assistance from the Sudan government. The

1. FO 371/19189, memo on Gambella, 6.3.35.

short-lived, yet relatively costly, bridge described above was supposed to be part of the whole venture. As increases in the volume of the coffee trade brought a rise in the share of customs due the Ethiopian government, so did the hopes of the consul grow that it would raise itself from its customary lethargy and channel some of the revenue into the project.¹

In 1924, the ill-fated Abyssinian Corporation tried to secure a new lease of life by seeking a concession to build the Bure-Gambella road and obtain transport rights over it. The scheme was supported by the legation in Addis Ababa and the Foreign Office in London, as well as, if somewhat lukewarmly, by the Department of Overseas Trade. Walker expressed surprise at the "pretension" of "a semi-bankrupt company" to launch such an enterprise and advised London to keep its hands off. What were needed were "two temporary bridges and a grading for animals", and these he could easily provide with local funds supplied by and through Nadaw and subscriptions from the merchants.² He was thinking in terms of an annual subsidy of 15,000 dollars for four years from the Ethiopian government.³ Further, he was so determined against any concessions that, even after the expected subsidy from the central government failed to materialize, he was counting

1. FO 371/9985, Walker to charg  d'aff., 19.7.22.

2. CRO Intel 1/14/63, encl. in DC Gambella to civ. sec., 20.3.24.; FO 371/9986, Russell to Curzon, 22.12.23.; Curzon to Allenby, 19.1.24.; memo by DOT, 1.2.24.; Russell to Macdonald, 22.3.24.

3. CRO Intel 1/14/64, Walker to Russell, 2.4.24.

on clearing the road with money "collected promiscuously".¹

He saw a ray of hope in 1927 when Fitawrari Dasta Damtaw, son-in-law of Ras Tafari, was sent by the latter to Gore apparently in response to Nadaw's repeated requests for financial assistance. The fitawrari was given an estimate of the cost of the planned motor road from Bure to Gambella: it came to 400,000 dollars, of which 200,000 were needed for bridge construction and 100,000 for clearing the road. But consul and governor waited in vain for the money.² For Ras Tafari soon struck a bargain with a dashing Greek businessman, Angelo Danalis, granting him the concession that Walker had fought so hard to prevent. Danalis had already started a transport service from Gambella with three lorries, and with tacit Sudan government blessing to his enterprise in the form of a promise of 75% reduction on downstream steamer fares for the lorries, if the experiment were to fail and Danalis forced to transport the lorries back to Khartoum.³ Three Ford tractors had arrived to clear the road from Gambella to the Bonga river and Danalis had even had a company known as the Anglo-Ethiopian Motor Communication Company registered. By February 1927, the lorries had started running from Gambella to the ferry at the Bonga river, a distance of

1. FO 371/11574, Walker to Murray, 13.10.26.

2. FO 371/12346, Walker to Bentinck, 9.2.27., 19.4.27.

3. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, Havercroft to fin. sec., 25.7.26.; fin. sec. to gen. manager Sudan govt. railways and steamers, 29.7.26.

some 35 kilometres.¹ Despite the frequent breakdowns of his lorries and the continual depletion of the labour force by malaria and desertions, Danalis' enthusiasm, as well as no doubt his bribes, impressed Ethiopian officials, including Nagadras Tafassa of Gore, who played an important role in the deliberations on the Bure-Gambella road. He is said to have asked Danalis once "in the name of Taffari" to bring English teachers to Ethiopia.² In July 1927, Danalis was granted, in partnership with T. Zervos, cousin of the Greek consul-general in Addis Ababa, the much coveted concession to build the Bure-Gambella road.

The consul-general, who also happened to be the personal physician of Ras Tafari and had doctored him back to consciousness after he had nearly drowned in Lake Aramaya in 1915,³ played a key role in the outcome of the contest for the concession. The chief rival to Danalis' bid was the Sudan Building and Agricultural Company, whose financial backer was a certain Stamatopoulos, an Alexandrian merchant with Sudan connections, and whose chairman was Sir John Maffey, governor-general of the Sudan. It was represented in Addis Ababa by Mr. Louiso, son-in-law of the famous Ydlibi, who was himself incidentally brother-in-law of Stamatopoulos' late wife. The Foreign Office had authorized the legation to support the company's

1. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, Walker to chargé d'aff., 8.9.26., 13.10.26.; Walker to gen. manager Sudan govt. railways, 7.2.27.

2. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, CIB (CEB) to civ. sec., 26.9.27.

3. Mars'e Hazan, Iyasu, p. 32.

bid. Walker, too, having lost all hope of an Ethiopian government undertaking in which he no doubt imagined himself as becoming the leading star, grudgingly accepted the inevitability of a road concession and hoped that the company, which was deemed capable of commanding more capital than Danalis, would obtain it.¹

According to Danalis, what decided the issue in his favour was the sum of over 21,000 dollars that he gave in bribes, whereas his rival had no immediate cash, although he could promise £250,000. In a letter to the Greek minister for foreign affairs, however, Louiso accused Dr. Zervos of dishonestly putting at the disposal of his cousin and Danalis the engineer's reports, plans and surveys that he had handed over to the consul-general to advance the case of his Greek patron, Stamatopoulos. The official British reaction to the whole affair, as typified by the minister in Addis Ababa, was ambivalent: "As I am not fully aware either of the extent to which British capital is interested in the Sudan Building and Agricultural Company, or of the extent to which Mr. Danalis has already interested or will eventually be able to interest British capital, I cannot say definitely whether the success of Mr. Danalis in obtaining this concession is to be deplored or welcomed."²

The concession was in fact in the nature of a private deal between Ras Tafari and Danalis, for what

1. FO 371/12346, Walker to Bentinck, 19.4.27., 25.5.27.; Bentinck to Chamberlain, 10.6.27.; CRO Civ. Sec. 12/3/14, Bentinck to GG, 30.3.27.

2. FO 371/12346, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 20.7.27.

actually happened was that Tafari transferred to Danalis and his partner the right over the Gore-Gambella section of a railway and motor road concession between the capital and Gambella that he had previously secured from the empress. The contract was to last for ten years. The contractors undertook to pay Tafari royalties of 10,000 dollars for the first year, 30,000 dollars for the second, and 70,000 dollars per year for the subsequent eight years. Any society that the contractors might form to exploit the concession was subject to Ethiopian law; further, priority was to be given to Ethiopians in the purchase of shares. The contractors were entitled to collect kotte (passage fees) on porters or pack animals using their road. (Kotte was traditionally paid to local governors or government officials.)¹

Subsequently, on 18 March, 1929, a supplementary agreement was concluded, whereby the duration of the contract was extended to thirty years while the annual payment to Tafari was raised to 100,000 dollars after the fifth year. The Ethiopian Motor Transport Company, as the company formed by Danalis and Zervos was known, also obtained the right of railway construction from Gambella to the Sudan boundary. Already in October 1928, Danalis and Zervos had sold for £200,000 their concession rights to another company, somewhat confusingly named as the Ethiopian Motor Transport Company Ltd., which in August,

1. FO 371/12346, encl. in AA despatch, 20.7.27. See B.S., 3.7.30., for the concession "granted" to Tafari.

1929, also bought the rights of the supplementary agreement for £100,000. Danalis succeeded in becoming managing director of this latter company. Messrs. Gellatly Hankey & Co., a British firm with a subsidiary in Khartoum, were its chief financial promoters, contributing a third of its capital. The major shareholders in 1931 (each share valued at £1) were as follows:

Angelo Danalis	83,400 shares
Thucydides Zervos	83,401
Gellatly Hankey & Co. Ltd	104,999
<u>Nagadras</u> Tafassa Habta Mikael	5,000
(<u>nagadras</u> of Gore)	
Emperor Haile Sellassie	3,000
Prince Asfa Wassan	2,000
(eldest son of emperor)	
Prince Makonnin	5,000 ¹
(younger son of emperor)	

A notice had been published in the government newspaper, Birhanina Salam, advertising the availability of shares of 10 dollars each to Ethiopian nationals; the minimum number of shares that one could buy was set up at ten.² But few, other than the ones already mentioned above,

1. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, Erskine to Barton, 12.12.34; CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, encl. in Dunbar to Chamberlain, 21.5.29., 2.4.29.; FO 371/15393, Barton to Henderson, 15.8.31. The two sons of the emperor, in their teens at the time, could hardly have been more than nominal owners of the shares, their father being the actual owner.

2. B.S., 21.2.29.

presumably had either the financial means or the capitalist bent of mind to respond.

Work on the road progressed slowly. Danalis of course continued to paint a glamorous picture. As early as May 1928, he claimed that he had built 110 (?) bridges in a thirty-mile stretch of the road, six of them with iron joints and concrete pipes; that his cars had transported 45,000 packages of 75 lbs. each between Gambella and Palouki (32 miles), the furthest point of the cleared road, faster and cheaper than either the donkeys or porters.¹ Subsequent investigation showed that only two crude structures over the Jowie and Bonga rivers could qualify to be called bridges. The cars were in very poor condition: three of them had been stranded at Bonga, their gears broken. The drivers had not been paid their wages for months, and were suffering from fever.² The company was beset by shortage of capital and scarcity of labour. It had a staff of sixteen Greeks and some Yemenis as well as a number of Egyptian and Sudanese masons and blacksmiths.³ What it lacked was an adequate supply of unskilled labour for breaking stones and for digging. Highland Ethiopians dreaded the prospect of working in the fever-infested plains. Danalis at one time thus considered importing some two hundred

1. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, interview with dir. of CIB, 16.5.28.

2. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, encl. in CIB to civ. sec., 17.9.28.

3. Ibid.; O.I. (Ganatos).

Egyptians from Upper Egypt. Erskine, in his desperation to save British money by all possible means, argued that the Ethiopian authorities should start a forcible conscription of labour, an idea which was not enthusiastically received at the legation.¹

In fact, the consul's excessive zeal in defending British interests was a source of embarrassment to his superiors. His extreme distaste for Danalis and his continued efforts to have him removed from the post of managing director was regarded as downright intrusive by Gellatly Hankey & Co., the body most concerned with the fate of EMTC Ltd. and in whose interest Erskine was supposedly agitating. He had an almost paranoiac fear that Danalis and Tafari were out to fleece the British: "the concession is being merely used to bait the British investor into subscribing to a company for which £300,000 is wanted to be divided by Mr. Danalis and his friends with some equally rapacious Abyssinians," he wrote to the civil secretary in Khartoum in May 1929.² He demanded not only that Danalis, whom he described as a "financial adventurer", be removed from his post but also that he be bought out of his financial interests in the company and that Gellatly Hankey take complete control of it and the concession. His sense of historical parallels was

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1. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, Erskine report, Feb. 1929; Dunbar to Erskine, 10.6.29.; Erskine to Barton, 29.6.29., 2.7.29.
 2. FO141/432, Erskine to civ. sec., 27.5.29.; cf. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, Erskine to civ. sec., 22.6.29., and CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, Erskine to Barton, 22.6.31.

sometimes very striking. He wrote in one of his reports: "Had a little foresight been used and the remembrance of Disraeli's action over the Suez Canal shares, the control of this important trade and strategic route would have remained British and moreover would have now been finished."¹

It cannot definitely be said that Erskine's impassioned reports did not influence opinion in either Khartoum or the legation in Addis Ababa. Harold MacMichael, civil secretary in Khartoum, certainly took them into consideration when weighing Danalis' qualifications for the road concession on the Sudanese side of the boundary that he had applied for to link up with his projected road/railway from Gambella to the boundary.² On the whole, however, the consul was politely ignored. The official policy of Khartoum was that "however much the Sudan Government might desire to place this matter of road and railway construction in Western Abyssinia on a more satisfactory basis than that described in your [i.e. Erskine's] reports, it has no status entitling it to repudiate a concession granted by a foreign power, in its own territory, to an individual of independent nationality, still less to dictate to whom that concession should be handed over and what the terms of it should be."³

1. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, Erskine report, Feb. 1929.

2. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, MacMichael to the Residency (Cairo), 18.6.29. See other papers in same file for this final variation on the western Ethiopia railway syndrome.

3. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, civ. sec. to Erskine, 9.7.29.

Gellatly Hankey were also unperturbed by Erskine's alarmist reports and continued to put their faith in Danalis. A representative of the company described him as "a good type of Greek [who] was better suited to get things done in Abyssinia than any English business man would be. In Abyssinia there must be bribery etc., which a Greek can deal with better than an Englishman."¹ While sympathising with the consul's wish to have Danalis removed, Gellatly Hankey were at pains to point out the delicacy of their position and the dangers of any precipitate action, which could result in the closing down of EMTC Ltd and, as a result, in a considerable financial loss to themselves. The consul's excesses they ascribed to the instigation of merchants who had competed with Danalis for the concession and were jealous of his success. His pretension to conduct all communication between the company and the Ethiopian authorities they resented.²

As it happened, nature soon intervened on Erskine's behalf and Danalis died in February 1932. A few months later, the company got the reduction in the annual fees to Tafari (now the Emperor Haile Sellassie) that it had sought for some time, and the British minister in Addis Ababa could write confidently that Gellatly Hankey were now unimpeded "to exploit the concession in a manner worthy of a reputable British firm".³ A year

1. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, interview with Mr. Cochrane, 17.7.29.

2. FO 371/15394, notes on EMTC Ltd., 18.10.31.; cf. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, Peterson to Barton, 29.10.31., and FO 371/15394, FO minutes, Oct. 1931.

3. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, Barton to Simon, 16.9.32.

earlier, he had complained not only about what he described as the crushing burden of the annual subsidies that the company had to pay but also about its dubious legal position and had argued the need for an entirely new concession.¹ Gellatly Hankey were confident about the soundness of the legal position of an enterprise in which the emperor and other members of the ruling class had a stake to the value of £17,000, and saw the problems of the company as mainly financial and economic. The operations of the company coincided with the salt monopoly granted to a French firm (which undermined the import of salt from the Sudan)² and a decline in the coffee trade. Coupled with the fall in the value of the dollar from 10 to the Egyptian pound to 20, which reduced the company's revenue by 50% on conversion, and the annual payments of 70,000 dollars to the emperor, the situation led, so Gellatly Hankey argued, to a loss.³ Accordingly in September 1932, the director of Gellatly Hankey, Mr. Smith, petitioned the emperor for a reduction of the annual tribute from the flat rate stipulated in the contract to one of 1/2 dollar per package transported. The emperor was quick to respond to the request: the company was allowed to pay only 20% of its gross annual receipts instead of the fixed rate of 100,000 dollars that it was expected to

1. FO 371/15393, Barton to Henderson, 15.8.31. The Foreign Office had echoed the same sentiments. FO 371/15393, FO to DOT, 22.9.31.

2. See above, pp. 296 ff.

3. FO 371/15394, FO minutes, Oct. 1931.

pay thereafter.¹

The company had used the annual tribute it had to pay as a convenient excuse for charging heavy transport rates. Early in 1931, the EMTC rate was said to be four times the porter rate.² It was, Erskine complained, an anomalous situation of mechanized transport increasing, rather than reducing, trading costs.³ Moreover, after the experience of 1929-30 when a decline in the value of the dollar depleted its revenue, the company refused to accept payment in Ethiopian currency and insisted on being paid in Egyptian money. It claimed that the rates were fixed in Khartoum in consultation with the principal coffee merchants and they had been progressively lowered from 30 PT. per package of 76 lbs for exports and 25 PT. for imports in August 1930 to 18 PT. for both import and export in April 1931.⁴ The agreement deliberately ignored the smaller traders, who were expected to accept the fait accompli. Erskine, in his capacity as chairman of the Gore chamber of commerce as well as no doubt propelled by his inveterate personal antipathy to Danalis and his constant wish to be at the centre of the stage, took it upon himself to champion their cause.

1. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, Barton to Simon, 5.9.32., 16.9.32.

2. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, Erskine to Barton, 1.1.31.

3. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, Erskine to Barton, 21.2.34.

4. FO 371/15394, notes re EMTC Ltd., 18.9.31. In 1934, Erskine reported that the company had to abandon the high rate that it had earlier proposed and settle for 22½ PT. for exports of coffee, 15 PT. for imports of general goods, and 13 PT. for salt import - all over a 32 mile distance. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, extract from Erskine quarterly, 31.3.34. Mr. Ganatos, one time employee of EMTC now living in Addis Ababa, gave 20 PT. as the standard fare from the Baro Qalla to Gambella.

He proceeded to enlist the support of the governor of Gore in fixing lower transport rates.¹ He was somewhat encouraged in this by the attitude of the legation that the concession stipulated that rates should be fixed with the approval of the Ethiopian government, i.e. in Gore and not in Khartoum.² Gellatly Hankey bewailed the consul's obstruction to their bid to make profit.³ The Foreign Office was equally exasperated by the consul's short-sightedness and wired the British minister in Addis Ababa to tell him that the EMTC represent "a genuine British interest entitled to protection and it is therefore essential that it should be left to the Abyssinians themselves to raise difficulties and that these should not be created by any action of His Majesty's Consul at Gore".⁴ Soon after, he was asked to limit his association with the Gore chamber of commerce to mere membership, unless "very strong local considerations" dictated otherwise.⁵

The dispute over rates led into the controversy over the company's right to collect kotte (passage fees) - an issue that remained unresolved throughout the period under study. The contract had authorized Danalis and his partner to levy kotte on all human and animal transport

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1. FO 371/15394, Relton to Wallinger, 27.10.31.
 2. FO 371/15394, Barton to FO, 2.11.31.
 3. FO 371/15394, FO minutes, Oct. 1931.
 4. FO 371/15394, FO to Barton, 12.11.31.
 5. FO 371/15394, Peterson to Barton, 10.12.31.

on their road, but the amount had not been specified. The company took advantage of this leeway to institute in 1930-31 its own scale based on the difference between the animal and porter rate from Bure to Gambella on the one hand and the porter rate from Bure to Baro Qalla and the motor rate from Baro Qalla to Gambella on the other - an average of 5 PT. per package. What prompted the company to exercise its prerogative, albeit in a rather arbitrary fashion, was the fact that the smaller traders, who were not under contract to use its transport service, took advantage of the fall in the value of the dollar and a decline in the volume of the coffee trade - both of which made human portering and animal transport cheaper than the company's motor transport - to use porters and donkeys rather than lorries. To the complaint that it could not arbitrarily impose its own scale but must collect on the scale of the traditional kotte, which was presumably lower than the company's scale, it retorted that the heavy annual tribute that it paid to the emperor entitled it to special consideration.¹ The question of the annual fees thus continued to be a convenient argument that the company tried to exploit at every opportunity.

But the kotte issue soon brought it into direct confrontation with established local interests. To begin with, its attempt to levy the kotte on the traders was disputed by Erskine as well as both the governor and nagadras of Gore. They maintained that the fees should

1. FO 371/15394, notes re EMTCL Ltd., 18.9.31.; CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, Erskine to Barton, 22.6.31.

rather be collected from the porters; Erskine went to the point of defining the porters as "transport contractors".¹ The company stopped trying to collect the fees altogether for some time. When it eventually got authority to levy \$1 kotte, it faced a formidable opposition from the customs officials of Gore, Bure, and Gambella (Ato Takla Maryam, Qañazmach Sayfi, and Ato Ababa Marawi). They were not only engaged in the coffee trade but had also a thriving business in animal transport, which Erskine wryly christened the Ethiopian Donkey Transport Company (in contrast with the Ethiopian Motor Transport Company Ltd)! They were reported to have some two hundred donkeys between them. They disputed the company's authority to charge kotte just because it had widened a track that was customarily used for human and animal transport. When it tried to stop their donkeys and porters from passing on the road, they used government police to force their way through.²

The dispute continued until the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. By this time, the company had managed to build only 35 miles (56 kms) of road and 12 (mostly timber) bridges in 8 years. Its ten General

1. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, Erskine to Smith, 23.4.31.; Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, Erskine to Barton, 22.6.31.

2. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, extract from Erskine report, June 1933; Erskine to Barton, 21.3.34, 6.3.34.; cf. Garretson, p. 24, for a similar competition between camel caravans and rail transport in eastern Ethiopia.

Motors lorries, driven by Sudanese and Greek drivers, transported packages between Baro Qalla and Gambella from January to August. Its Gambella terminal was a 1 sq. km. enclave on the bank of the Baro opposite to the trading post. Despite the invasion, the operations of the company continued until 1938.¹

In comparison with the Bure-Gambella road, the Sayo-Gambella road fared better. The main problem here was the Sakko river, and the bridges that Jote had built rarely lasted more than a year. In 1926, his successor, Dajach Birru, was reputed to have had a more solid structure of cement built across the river. He also had a new road cleared, at the same time proclaiming an edict threatening merchants who preferred to use the old route with confiscation of their goods.² Birru's new road scarcely diminished the ordeal of the porters, and the need for a motor road was pointed out in some quarters for this and other reasons.³ Some time after he contracted away the Gore-Gambella section of his concession to Danalis and Zervos, Tafari sold to Dajach Makonnin, governor of Sayo, for 30,000 dollars the Sayo-Gambella section, which Tafari again presumably claimed was included in the concession he had obtained from the empress. In partnership with a certain Dr. Strümer, Makonnin used forced labour to build about 10 miles of the

1. O.I. (Ganatos); cf. CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/24, Erskine to Barton, 21.2.34, and Barton to Lampson, 26.11.35.

2. B.S., 25.3.26., 20.5.26., 10.6.26.

3. B.S., 13.9.28., 29.11.28.

road in a matter of a year. A dispute soon arose between Makonnin and EMTCL Ltd, who claimed that their contract gave them a monopoly over all road construction from Gambella. The issue was settled rather amicably, the governor surrendering the road to the company, possibly after some payment.¹ Subsequently, the Birbir Mines Ltd, a British company that had acquired part of the Prasso mining concession,² utilized the road construction rights granted by the concession to build a rough motor track between Gambella and Yubdo, passing about 5 miles south-east of Sayo. The first motor lorry arrived in Sayo from Gambella early in 1935.³

Assessment of Gambella Trade

The establishment of the Gambella trading post was in the nature of a double challenge: to the established routes of Ethio-Sudanese trade - Matamma and the sa'id on the one hand; and to Ethiopia's eastern commercial outlet, Jibouti, on the other. Quite early in the period under study, Gambella succeeded in establishing itself as undoubtedly the most important venue of Ethio-Sudanese commerce. Some 70% of this trade passed through Gambella. The more ambitious British strategy of using

1. FO 371/14595, encl. in Barton to Henderson, 25.3.30.; CRO Civ. Sec. 65/7/23, encl. in fin. sec. to govr. UNP, 5.1.30.

2. See below, p. 417.

3. FO 371/18031, encl. in Barton to Simon, 10.5.34.; SMR 76, Apr-May 1935.

the trading post as a lever to dislodge Jibouti - and thereby the French - from commercial paramountcy in Ethiopia was not so successful. At the end of the period, up to 75% of Ethiopia's foreign trade still continued to pass through the French port; the total value of transfrontier trade with the Sudan accounted for some 17%.

This should not conceal the remarkable growth of Gambella from an obscure village - little known and even less valued - to the most important commercial emporium in western Ethiopia. Yet, the trade figures showed considerable ups and downs, although only once after 1915 did the value of trade (in Egyptian pounds) go below the six digit figure: in 1931, a combination of a decline in coffee exports and an even more dramatic fall of salt imports from the Sudan as a result of the salt monopoly brought the total value of trade to a new record low of £E76,512.¹ The highest value of Gambella trade, £E355,990, was attained in 1925,² and the second highest, £E306,752, in 1920.³ In both years, the value of imports into the Sudan via Gambella reached record levels of over £E200,000. From 1915, when we begin to have consistently six digit figures for the total value of trade, imports into the Sudan alone invariably accounted for more than half and sometimes, as in 1932, up to four-fifths of it. If we include the value of outgoing transit

1. A.R., sec. for ec. devt. and statistics of for. tr., 1932-33, app. XII.

2. CEB, A.R., 1927-28, app. XVI.

3. CEB, A.R., 1920, p. 79.

trade, the proportion becomes even higher. This underlines one of the most important features of Gambella trade, as of Ethio-Sudanese trade in general - i.e. the favourable balance of trade for Ethiopia. According to one report, this balance ranged from £E1,655 in 1912 to £E145,665 in 1925 and £E150,951 in 1924.¹ By contrast, trade through Jibouti was characterized by an unfavourable balance for Ethiopia,² a state of affairs explicable to a large extent by the growth in the capital of a class that had developed a taste for manufactured goods.

Gambella was not of course the only route of Ethio-Sudanese trade. Matamma, historically the most significant centre of trade and warfare between the two countries, continued as a fairly significant commercial post. Immediately after the end of the Mahdiyya, the eyes of both Wingate and Minilik inevitably turned to this site, and it was here that the first serious efforts to promote transfrontier trade were made.³ But the Matamma route suffered from the burden of its past. Gondar, Gore's equivalent in northern Ethiopia, continued to feel for some time the effects of the Ansar raids of the 1880s and the cholera epidemic of the 1890s.⁴ In addition, Matamma trade was plagued by the same problems that tended to depress Gambella trade, such as the proliferation of

1. Mackereth, app. VI.

2. Ibid., app. V.

3. See above, p. 104.

4. FO 141/402, encl. in Henry to Findlay, 5.7.06.; John Ward, Our Sudan (London, 1905), p. 295; Jean Parmentier, "De Khartoum à Addis-Abeba", La Géographie, XXV (Paris, 1912), pp. 233-36.

kella and the shortage of MTD.¹ But the most important development pertaining to Matamma trade was the growing competition from the Italians, who were striving hard to divert much of the Gondar-Matamma trade to their own port of Massawa in Eritrea. They went about doing this with a vigour and diplomacy which continued to amaze and alarm the British.² For, intertwined with the question of trade routes was the vital issue of the control of the waters of Lake Tana, a major desideratum of British imperial policy in Ethiopia. Even more fundamentally, however, the fate of the Matamma route, for long an important channel of Abyssinian foreign trade, was determined by the beginning of a new epoch in the economic history of Ethiopia - the shift of the geopolitical centre of the empire from the north to Addis Ababa, and the corresponding rise to importance of the southern and southwestern provinces. Hence, too, the growing prominence of Gambella in relation to Matamma, as the former was intended by the British to be a sort of backdoor entrance to the wealth that was concentrating on the capital and, so they feared, was going to be tapped almost exclusively by the Franco-Ethiopian railway.

This is not to say, however, that Matamma ceased to have any significance. Wingate's characterisation of Matamma trade in 1913 as "of a pedlar nature"³ might very

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1. FO 141/409, Armbruster report, 25.8.07.
 2. CRO Intel 2/24/189, statement of Mikhaili George; FO 371/1294, Thesiger to Grey, 3.4.12.
 3. FO 371/1570, Wingate to Kitchener, 29.1.13.; cf. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Abyssinia, 1913.

well have persisted throughout the period, as few commercial firms are mentioned in connection with this route. In 1924, the governor of Kassala was still worried by Italian activities aimed at capturing the Gondar market. But, with total trade via Matamma at a peak of £E80,071,¹ he could state confidently that the Matamma route, patronised by Ras Gugsa (governor of Begemdir) because of the customs he got from it, was preferred to the Eritrean one.² A substantial amount of coffee was exported from Zage, an island on Lake Tana, to the Sudan via Matamma, although it later became progressively less than that via Kurmuk and Roseires, let alone Gambella.³ In the years 1925-30, the relative coffee exports through the three routes were valued thus:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Matamma</u>	<u>Gambella</u>	<u>Kurmuk and Roseires</u>
1925	£E29,949	209,955	27,654
1926	21,019	173,174	20,176
1927	17,277	123,607	23,720
1928	15,730	145,321	25,491
1929	2,913	178,626	35,051
1930	12,362	167,171	39,600 ⁴

But Matamma clearly dominated the cattle and tombac exports to the Sudan, only the Kurmuk route posing

1. See app. A.

2. CRO Intel 1/5/23, govr. Kassala to civ. sec., 25.2.24.

3. Parmentier, p. 243; Ward, p. 304; FO 141/416, encl. in Wingate to Graham, 10.10.08.

4. CEB, A.R., 1927-28, 1930-31.

some challenge in the latter item.¹ Unlike Gambella exports to the Sudan, too, which almost exclusively consisted of coffee, Matamma exports showed considerable variety.² Matamma also attracted a fair proportion of the re-exports from the Sudan to Ethiopia. In the years 1914-17, 1921, 1924, and 1929-32, the value of these re-exports exceeded those via Gambella.

Indeed, as the value of re-export trade via Gambella continued to show a sharp decline through the late 20s and early 30s, that via Kurmuk and Roseires shot up correspondingly until it reached £E35,812 in 1932, i.e. more than double the figure for Matamma and four times that of Gambella. Further, while Gambella trade fluctuated considerably, reaching an unusual low in 1931, and Matamma trade showed a progressive decline once it attained its peak in 1925 (incidentally a peak year for Gambella as well), Kurmuk trade is notable for the fact that it exhibited an almost evenly progressive rise throughout the period.³ By 1932, the Kurmuk route had come to replace the Matamma route as the most important venue of Ethio-Sudanese trade after Gambella. It accounted for nearly 30% of the total trade, while Gambella's share was some 60%.⁴

In the nineteenth century, of course, when the

1. Ibid.

2. See CEB, A.R., 1927-28, 1930-31 A.R., sec. for ec. devt. and statistics of for. tr. 1932-33.

3. See apps., esp. A & B.

4. App. A.

Gambella trading post did not exist, the Qessan route in the sa'id was the most important channel of trade between Ethiopia and the Sudan south of the Abbay (Blue Nile). The sheikhdoms of the sa'id found their origin in the prosperous trade that then existed between the Oromo country and the Sudan. An important trade route linked markets like Fazughli, Qessan, Dul, Asosa, Kirin, and Fadasi. The last mentioned was in particular a significant commercial emporium, linking Berta and Oromo to the Sudan. In the twentieth century, Kurmuk replaced Qessan as the main post of transfrontier trade in the sa'id. Even more important was the establishment of the Gambella trading post, which brought about an effective re-orientation of Oromo trade to the south. Thereafter, aside from the illicit traffic in slaves, which remained its speciality, the Kurmuk route was more or less reduced to the position of an overland supplement to the river route from Gambella. The former thrived when the latter was inactivated by the end of the rainy season and the fall of the level of the Baro, as well as when other restrictions on Gambella pushed it forward as a convenient alternative.. For instance, when the salt monopoly stopped salt imports through Gambella, imports of the commodity via Kurmuk and Roseires rose from £E644 in 1930 to £E1,861 in 1931 and £E4,524 in 1932.¹ It is also worth noting that trade that eluded the official statistics was being conducted along the Kurmuk and Matamma routes - i.e. slave

sec. for ec. devt. and statistics of for. tr.,
 1. CEB, A.R.,/1932-33, app. XIIB; cf. SIR 203, June 1911, app.

traffic in the former¹ and smuggling in both. This would suggest that the picture of the relative position of the three posts that is derived from the official statistics, while substantially reliable, did not quite represent the real situation. In 1913, for example, some £E12,000 worth of goods are said to have been smuggled into Ethiopia via Matamma (in contrast to the official figure of £E5,984, i.e. export plus re-export).²

Nevertheless, Gambella's leading position as the major port of Ethio-Sudanese commerce can hardly be said to have been seriously challenged. This became even more dramatically evident in the transit trade, all of which passed through Gambella.³ Only twice, in 1917 and 1926, did the two other ports have any share in this trade. Here, the quantitative difference between Gambella and the two other posts that we have observed thus far assumes a qualitative character. For the essence of Gambella was that, unlike Matamma and Kurmuk, which were merely continuations of earlier trading patterns and routes, it represented a new era in the development of Ethiopia's foreign trade - a period of established commercial firms rather than peripatetic pedlars, of steamers rather than mule caravans. The steamer was indeed the western equivalent of the railway in the east. Like Jibouti, Gambella was the means by which Ethiopia

1. See above, pp. 206-13.

2. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Abyssinia, 1913.

3. See app. E.

was drawn, albeit reluctantly, into the ambit of the world market. The goods exported through Matamma and Kurmuk were goods largely destined for consumption in the Sudan. Hence their variety, ranging from donkeys and mules to tombac, from cattle to honey, and from chillies and spices to coffee. The commodities exported through Gambella were mainly coffee, beeswax and rubber. Of these, only coffee was destined for almost exclusive consumption in the Sudan; the other two commodities passed in transit to Europe. In 1913-15, transit trade through Gambella constituted 50-60% of the total trade. In subsequent years, the proportion declined (with the exception of 1925) until it rose again in the early 1930s.¹

The value of the goods imported through Gambella demonstrated even more clearly Gambella's links with European markets and relegated the Sudan to a position of secondary importance. These goods included not only those passing directly in transit, but also others of European origin first imported into Sudan and subsequently re-exported to Ethiopia. The former were such items as Maria Theresa dollars, cotton piece goods, sacks, ironware, and machinery. The latter included cotton fabrics, silk and silk thread, liquor, empty sacks, and machinery. The value of goods re-exported was invariably higher than the value of the exports of Sudan produce, which were mainly salt, unginned cotton, and dammur cloth. In 1918, re-exports were valued at more than seven times the value of

1. Cf. apps. A & E.

exports. With the exception of the years 1917-24, when it was low, partly because of World War I, ingoing transit trade also exceeded in value that of Sudan exports. Thus, particularly in connection with the re-export trade, the Sudan may be said to have played the role of opening up the western Ethiopian market to the manufactured goods of industrial Europe. Or, as far as the foreign trade of the Sudan is concerned, western Ethiopia can be seen as the backyard where its surplus goods could be dumped. Re-export trade was also a boon to the Sudan treasury, for it was charged a total of 16% in customs (8% in Port Sudan and another 8% in Gambella), unless items were re-exported within six months of their previous importation, in which case they were charged only a further 1% export duty after the payment at Port Sudan. Nor should the transit trade, exempt from customs, create a misleading impression of the Sudan being a passive conduit in this respect, as it brought additional revenue to the Sudan railways and steamers.

The proportion of Ethiopian trade with the Sudan compared to Egypt and Britain, was naturally negligible. Both the Sudan and Ethiopia were almost exclusively producers of raw products. The same applied to the Sudan's southern neighbours, the Congo and Kenya. Sudanese foreign trade was therefore mainly oriented to the two countries that held cultural and political sway in the Sudan - Egypt and Britain. Until 1919, Egypt enjoyed a leading position in both the export and import trade of the Sudan. It was only in 1920 that Britain began to supplant her in

this respect.

The proportion of the five leading countries in the foreign trade of the Sudan for that year was as follows:

Britain	34.4%
Egypt	31
India and Aden	14
South Africa	4.25
Ethiopia	4

The following year, Ethiopia, with a percentage of 5.7, rose to become the fourth most important trading partner of the Sudan, a position she had occupied in 1912 and 1913 as well. However, it was soon taken over by Japan, who continued to show a dramatic rise in its trade figures until it supplanted India and Aden in 1930 and came close to second place in 1932 with a percentage of 13.9%, compared to Egypt's 15.1%. Ethiopia persisted in fifth place.¹

But a word of caution is required here. The above percentages were derived only from the export and import trade proper, which in the case of Ethiopia primarily consisted of coffee in exchange for salt. The evaluation did not take into account the transit and re-export trade, whose significance we have noted above. While the outgoing transit trade did not seriously affect Ethiopia's

1. Mackereth, app. VI; CEB, A.R., 1908-1913; A.R., sec. for ec. devt. and statistics of for. tr., 1932-33, p. 44; R. Davies, "Economics and Trade", in J.A. de C. Hamilton, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan from Within (London, 1935), p. 295.

share of the import trade into the Sudan, the re-export and ingoing transit trade figures would alter the proportion of the export trade from the Sudan to give Ethiopia a higher percentage than India and Aden, who until 1930 were the third most important trading partners of the Sudan.¹ Up to 38% of Sudan's re-exports were destined for Ethiopia.² In the transit trade of the Sudan, too, particularly the ingoing transit, Ethiopia's share was comparatively higher. There was indeed a year, 1919, when nearly all the ingoing transit trade of the Sudan (i.e. £E2,060 out of a total of £E2,557) was destined for Ethiopia. In later years, the proportion showed a decrease but nonetheless remained substantial. Ethiopia's share in the outgoing transit trade of the Sudan was not inconsiderable, either, particularly in the years 1913-19, when it averaged some 75%. Even in the import trade of the Sudan, while the total figures may show Ethiopia to have had a rather small share, the figures for coffee imports underline Ethiopia's particular importance to the foreign trade of the Sudan. As Appendix F illustrates, Gambella alone supplied some 60% of Sudan's coffee requirements. In 1926 and 1928, the respective figures were 2,526 tons (out of a total of 3,183) and 3,061 tons (out of a total of 3,754). The consumption of Ethiopian coffee in the Sudan increased twofold in 1916 and 1917 when the war situation barred imports of American coffee.³

1. See figures for 1908-1913, CEB, A.R.

2. See app. D.

3. M. Boucoiran, "La situation économique de l'Éthiopie, 1913-1917", Renseignements coloniaux, no. 11 (1918), p. 190.

The following figures further show the predominant position "Abyssinian" coffee enjoyed in the Sudanese market:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Imports from Ethiopia</u>	<u>Imports from elsewhere</u>	<u>Total Sudan Imports</u>
1910	£25,862	13,929	39,791
1911	45,463	9,901	55,364
1912	53,459	11,073	64,532
1913	57,526	10,019	67,545

The breakdown of the 1913 value among the three stations was £35,859 for Gambella, £19,437 for Matamma, and £2,230 for Kurmuk.¹

Nor should one forget the political values of Ethio-Sudanese trade to the British - values which cannot be so easily quantified as the statistics of foreign trade. From the start, Wingate conceived of transfrontier trade between the two countries not only in economic terms but also as a useful means of checking border raids. In the debate over the fate of Gambella that persisted throughout its history, it was often political considerations that weighed the balance in favour of its continuation when the poor figures of trade (in comparison with the commercial bonanza that the British had initially dreamt of) and the various problems under which the trading post had to operate tended to push the Sudan government to close it altogether. The reluctance of British firms to trade in

1. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Abyssinia, 1913.

Ethiopia in general and Gambella in particular was a major source of worry both to British authorities and to such adventurous figures as Major Darley.¹ One non-British trader, dismayed by the rather low level of trade in the west, even went to the point of expressing a desire for a British occupation to break Ethiopian arrogance and superiority complex, as he put it, and open the country for trade.² But such a line of thinking rarely struck a chord in the cautious atmosphere of Khartoum. Maffey, the governor-general in 1930, expressed the essence of Sudan government policy in Ethiopia when, in response to a query as to whether the Sudan would be interested in buying shares in the new Bank of Ethiopia, he said: "What the Sudan needs is the maintenance of a strong British influence in Abyssinia which can be directed to our advantage. ... We cannot afford to undertake new risks."³ What was needed was to orient western Ethiopia, politically as well as economically, to the Sudan.

Finally, what was the place of Ethio-Sudanese trade in general and Gambella trade in particular in the overall picture of Ethiopia's external commerce? In real terms, Gambella could scarcely vie with Jibouti as Ethiopia's major port of external trade. 70 to 80% of Ethiopia's foreign trade passed through the French port, with the remainder being divided among the other routes -

1. A&P, vol. 46 (1911), C.R., Abyssinia, 1910; FO 371/3127, Darley to Sperling, 3.3.18.

2. FO 371/3127, Dervaniades to company, 10.5.18.

3. FO 371/14596, Maffey to Murray, 8.9.30.

Massawa-Assab in Eritrea, Zeila in British Somaliland, and Gambella-Kurmuk-Matamma. A negligible amount passed to British East Africa (i.e. Kenya and Uganda) and Italian Somaliland. But while the proportion passing through Jibouti showed a progressive decline, those for Eritrea and the Sudan rose correspondingly:

	<u>1911</u>	<u>1914</u>	<u>1917</u>
Eritrea	9%	10%	12.5%
Sudan	5.0	6.0	10.0
British East Africa	1.0	1.0	1.0
Italian Somaliland	1.5	1.5	1.5
British Somaliland	3.5	4.0	4.0
Jibouti	80.0	77.5	71.0 ¹

By the end of the period the Sudan route had become the second most important with a share of some 12% of the total foreign trade (compared to 8% on the Eritrean route),² or up to 17% if the Eritrean route is excluded.³

When it came to the export trade, the Sudan route had a comparatively greater share. This averaged some 20% of the total (again excluding Eritrea), Between 1928 and 1930, or about a third of Jibouti exports in 1929-30.⁴ As noted above, the consistently favourable

1. Boucoiran, p. 188; cf. Rey, Unconquered Abyssinia, p. 194; Rein, p. 9; and Huyn, p. 128.

2. A. Zervos, L'Empire d'Éthiopie (Addis Ababa, 1935), p. 151.

3. Mackereth, app. V.

4. Ibid.

balance of trade was the distinctive feature of the Sudan route. The balance ranged from £E3000 in 1905 to £E128,151 in 1930. On the other hand, the Jibouti route in the latter year showed a balance against Ethiopia to the value of £143,260.¹ Gambella's position as the main outlet of "Abyssinian", i.e. non-plantation, coffee was the main factor for the favourable balance of trade. The western Ethiopian post is said to have attracted as much as two-thirds of the country's total export of this commodity quite early in its life.² Jibouti, which specialized in "Harari", i.e. plantation, coffee, saw its share in "Abyssinian" coffee dwindle from a value of £11,982 in 1907 to £1,568 in 1910.³ Rubber was sent largely and at times exclusively via Jibouti, with the exception of 1907-08, when nearly two-thirds of the total export passed through the Sudan.⁴ But Gambella's share in the wax trade was much higher than the relatively smaller percentage of its share of total trade would suggest. 210 tons of this commodity were exported via Gambella in 1913, compared to 640 tons via Jibouti.⁵ Zervos⁶ gives the following figures for export of wax on the two routes between 1928 and 1934:

1. Ibid., p. 14; cf. B.S., 5.11.25.

2. A&P, vol. 42 (1907), C.R., Abyssinia, 1905-06.

3. A&P, vol. 43 (1909), C.R., Abyssinia, 1907-08; vol. 46 (1911), C.R., Abyssinia, 1910.

4. A&P, vol. 43 (1909), C.R., Abyssinia, 1907-08. See below, pp. 395-6.

5. A&P, vol. 34 (1914-16), C.R., Abyssinia, 1913.

6. p. 162.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Jibouti</u>	<u>Gambella</u>
1928	293,892 kg.	120,108
1929	316,953	149,884
1930	318,606	101,635
1931	340,879	92,035
1932	321,902	104,202
1933	340,033	129,206
1934	324,559	149,950

With cheaper transport rates,¹ it is surprising that Gambella did not draw an even larger proportion of Ethiopia's foreign trade. This cheapness of the Gambella route - as well as rumours of British plans to deepen the Baro to enable year-round navigation - was indeed one of the few things that occasionally jolted French consular officials and observers from their smug confidence in the pre-eminence of Jibouti.² But other more important factors were working against Gambella's posing a serious challenge to Jibouti. Over and above the daunting physical problems that the trading post encountered from its inception, Minilik and his successors saw their political power inevitably tied up with the concentration of trade in the capital. Minilik, as we have observed above, consciously tried to direct all trade to Addis Ababa and thence to Jibouti. Informants spoke of caravans from as

1. See above, p. 311.

2. Boucoiran, p. 190; Paul Barré, "Les Ressources de l'Abyssinie", Revue Française, XXV (Paris, 1900), p. 21.

far west as Gore going to the capital.¹ Of the provincial governors with whom the British sought to strike a profitable partnership and thereby realize the enormous

potential of Gambella, only Ras Nadaw could be said to

The establishment of monopolies over certain valuable commodities has not been unknown to Ethiopian rulers in the past. Ivory, as we have seen above, was a royal monopoly. So was gold. It was these traditional royal monopolies that singular enthusiasm for road-building, however. Nevertheless, despite its failure to supplant Jibouti as the major port of Ethiopia's foreign trade, the Gambella trading post remained the most important commercial out-relationship with the colonial powers. Aden, the latter to recognize the independent existence of Ethiopia and to regard to economic influence and commercial penetration rather than outright territorial annexation. The fact that the most important concession in modern Ethiopian history, the railway concession to the French, was granted in 1894, i.e. two years before the battle of Adwa, does not alter the character of concessions. Two important mining concessions were granted in Wallega in 1899 and 1900. The concession of Atsahadim, the most important concession after the railway, was established in 1905. A number of other mining, agricultural and trading concessions were given this century.

Concessions in Ethiopia, particularly those of the earlier years, were rarely the kind of straight business deals between foreign syndicates and the emperor or the government that one might tend to think. There were often favoured

¹ 1. O.I. (Tafari, Tirunah).

CHAPTER 6

Concessions and Monopolies

The establishment of monopolies over certain valuable commodities has not been unknown to Ethiopian rulers in the past. Ivory, as we have seen above, was a royal monopoly. So was gold.¹ It was these traditional royal monopolies that naturally evolved into the modern concessions. At the same time concessions were an expression of the pattern of Ethiopia's relationship with the colonial powers. Adwa forced the latter to recognize the independent existence of Ethiopia and to resort to economic influence and commercial penetration rather than outright territorial annexation. The fact that the most important concession in modern Ethiopian history, the railway concession to the French, was granted in 1894, i.e. two years before the battle of Adwa, does not alter the over-all post-Adwa character of concessions. Two important mining concessions were granted in Wallaga in 1899 and 1900. The Bank of Abyssinia, the most important concession after the railway, was established in 1905. A number of other mining, agricultural and trading concessions were given this century.

Concessions in Ethiopia, particularly those of the earlier years, were rarely the kind of straight business deals between foreign syndicates and the emperor of the government that one might tend to think. There were often favoured

1. See Garretson, p. 257.

intermediaries between the Ethiopian authorities and international capital. Such was the role of Ilg (to whom the railway concession was given) in relation to Minilik, of Ydlibi in relation to Minilik, Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis, and Iyasu, and of Danalis in relation to Ras Tafari. This partnership between Ethiopian rulers and favoured expatriates was a significant feature of concessions, as indeed of the whole process of Ethiopia's gradual initiation into the world market.

A detailed discussion of concessions is beyond the scope of this thesis. What will be attempted is an assessment of those that more strictly pertained to Gambella trade and had a bearing on British policy in western Ethiopia as well as on relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan. By way of introduction, though, one or two general observations might be ventured. The Americans, who were very much behind the other powers in the hunt for concessions (although they had a substantial share of the abu jedid trade) bemoaned as late as 1921 the political obstacles to foreign investment in the country.¹ An Ethiopian intellectual of the time, Nagadras Gabra Hiywat Baykadan, also castigated government officials for their short-sightedness in discouraging foreign investment and their false sense of pride in refusing to give concessions. On the other hand, arguing that free competition is the source of progress, he resented the creation of such monopolies as the Bank of Abyssinia. He maintained that it was better to encourage

2. Frank B. Hayter, Gold of Ethiopia (London, 1938), pp.

1. USA 884.63/7, 1921. report. 5.2.22.

foreign capitalists to invest and manufacture in the country rather than import their goods from abroad, although, curiously enough, he seemed to think that such an arrangement was compatible with the development of cottage industry that was another important consideration of his treatise.¹ A British adventurer and gold-hunter, writing a few years later, blamed the unscrupulousness and misconduct of concession-seekers for the reluctance of the emperor to grant more concessions. He also argued that the issue of concessions in Ethiopia was not merely one of Ethiopian obstruction,² pointing out that the British government itself was discouraging investment outside the British empire. The Ethiopian delegate to the League of Nations, Bajirond Takla Hawaryat, defended his government's policy in the matter thus:

"Ethiopia is accused of having allowed the riches of the country to remain unexploited; we recognise this, and are animated by a very sincere desire to remedy that state of affairs. Nevertheless, when to-day there is a crisis of over-production in the world, will anyone blame us for not having contributed to the aggravation of that evil which is deplored on all hands?"³

On the other hand, Birhanina Salam, in a 1927 article, not only resented the jeopardising of Ethiopian independence by the cession of such monopolies as the bank to foreign groups but also argued for government monopolies in the vital abujedid

1. Pp. 81, 84, 98, 140f.

2. Frank E. Hayter, Gold of Ethiopia (London, 1936), pp. 10-11, 14-20.

3. RH Mss Brit Emp. S22/G276, n.d.

4. See above, p. 39.

of thinking is evident in the question of the Bare agricultural trade and in salt extraction. It also appealed to the concession, although perhaps less so on the issue of the rubber tradition-bound nobility to catch up with the times and monopoly - in both of which Yalibi was the central figure, transform themselves from the valiant warriors they had been in the past to factory owners.¹

The Rubber Concession With perhaps the single most important exception of the story of the Abyssinian Corporation, British attitude towards investment in Ethiopia was, as Hayter suggested, lukewarm. We have already seen how most unequivocally Bramly, a thoroughly disillusioned man, stated his objections to British investment in Ethiopia.² Twenty-four years later, another (more highly placed) observer not only highlighted the weakness of the authority of the central government in the provinces, which rendered the successful working of concessions impossible, but also doubted whether there was to begin with much mineral wealth awaiting exploitation.³ British policy could thus be described as generally pre-emptive rather than assertive, i.e. preventing other powers from securing concessions or foot-holds which they deemed prejudicial to British interests, rather than exerting an effort to get them themselves. Even the quest for the Tana concession, which remained a perennial preoccupation of British imperial policy in Ethiopia, had its origin in a desire to prevent other powers from interfering with the waters of the Nile.⁴ The same line

1. B.S., 23.6.27.

2. See above, p. 239.

3. Mackereth, p.11.

4. See above, p.39.

of thinking is evident in the question of the Baro agricultural concession, although perhaps less so on the issue of the rubber monopoly - in both of which Ydlibi was the central figure.

The Rubber Monopoly

On 1st September, 1905, Minilik gave to a British firm, the Kordofan Trading Company, a concession for extracting rubber throughout the empire for a period of ten years. The company was to pay a royalty of 7 dollars per farasula for the first three years, and 10 dollars thereafter. It was expected to plant not less than 3000 trees annually. The concession would become null and void if work was not begun within a year of its being granted.¹ Although the concession covered the whole country, the activities of the company were concentrated in western Ethiopia. From the outset, the fate of the Imperial Ethiopian Rubber Company, as it soon came to be known, was enmeshed in the personal antagonism between Harrington, the British minister, and Ydlibi, the Syrian merchant who was instrumental in acquiring the concession and was to become the company's representative in Ethiopia.² Apparently the minister had secretly approached Ydlibi to forego the concession so that he himself could claim it in the name of the Bank of Abyssinia.³ Harrington described Ydlibi as "a financial adventurer";⁴

1. FO 141/393, Harrington to Cromer, 5.9.05; FO 371/2, encl. in KTC to Gorst, 5.1.06.

2. The Times, law report, 14.10.10; O.I. (Majid)

3. FO 371/5507, encl. in Nield to Harmsworth, 31.10.21.

4. FO 141/398, Harrington to FO, 16.11.06.

Ydlibi in turn accused Harrington of being responsible for the decline of British influence in Ethiopia through his discourtesy to the emperor and his bad counselling on vital issues like the railway.¹ The company, which felt that it suffered by the discord between its representative and the British minister, remonstrated against the vindictive attitude of the latter.²

Soon, however, a more fundamental rift developed between Ydlibi and the company. In March 1908, the company dismissed him on the ground that he had concluded the negotiations with the emperor which he had been entrusted with in a way which gave him sole control of the company's affairs, although he had been told earlier to desist from interfering in the management or the finances of the company; a British manager had already been appointed. In taking such a drastic step, the company appears to have miscalculated the strength of Ydlibi's backing among high-placed Ethiopian officials, particularly that of Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis. Hohler, Harrington's successor, while he had labelled Ydlibi "a consummate rascal", had nevertheless advised a policy of isolating him first from the nagadras to bring about his downfall.³ And sure enough, the nagadras cabled an ultimatum to the company to comply in ten days with the emperor's wish for the retention of the management by Ydlibi or face the revocation

1. FO 371/193, Ydlibi to Burrard, 12.1.07.

2. FO 371/2, KTC to Gorst, 5.1.06.

3. FO 371/192, Hohler to Mallet, 20.8.07.

3. FO 371/396, 20.8.07. In chairman of ... to ... 27.8.08.

of the concession.¹ Ydlibi himself subsequently claimed during the court proceedings in London that the issue of management was not at his instigation but the desire of the emperor, who wanted to deal with an individual and not a company and, as Ydlibi put it, "did not wish to be troubled with the Legation and people from London."²

The concession was revoked. Besides the question of management, on which the Ethiopian authorities felt strongly they should have been consulted, as the concession had made the Ethiopian government alaga (head) of the company, they pointed out the failure of the company to bring sufficient capital and to plant the stipulated number of rubber trees as additional reasons for the revocation. Apparently on the request of the company, a German arbitrator, Dr. Zintgraff, was appointed to examine the decision and his final verdict was favourable to the company. He ruled that the faults of the company were too light to warrant the revocation order and left it to the "good-will of the Abyssinian Government either to give the Company an opportunity to continue the work which has been begun, on a new basis, or to give them compensation in some other way for the work and money spent."³ Subsequent efforts by British officials to urge a restoration of the concession on the basis of the arbitrator's recommendation were frustrated both by the declining health of Minilik and the

1. FO 371/396, memo from the company, 9.4.08.

2. The Times, law report, 14.10.10. 15.10.10.

3. FO 371/396, encl. in chairman of co. to FO, 27.8.08.

Hervey to Gray, 25.11.08; FO 371/396, Encl. to Gray, 24.9.09; FO 371/594, Hervey to Gray, 10.9.09; FO 141/422, Hervey to Gray, 30.1.09, 2.1.09, 27.1.09, 7.11.09.

determined opposition of Hayla Giyorgis. The lukewarm attitude of Harrington, who had allegedly written a private letter to Minilik during the arbitration saying that he was defending the company out of sheer necessity because they were British, was a galling experience to them. They regarded this not only as a breach of faith, as the minister had promised to assist them once Ydlibi was removed, but also the source of all their troubles in Ethiopia.¹ The success of the company in attracting the sympathy of such potentates as Ras Tassamma, Ras Walda Giyorgis, and Fitawrari Habta Giyorgis, the appointment of Dr. Zintgraff as adviser to the emperor in the middle of 1909, even the temporary ebb in the political fortune of Hayla Giyorgis a few months later could not succeed in reversing the revocation.²

Meanwhile, as from May 1908, the extraction and sale of rubber had continued as a government monopoly under the direction of Ydlibi. There were agents, mostly Ethiopian, in centres like Gidami, Sayo, Bure, and Gore, as well as in Jimma, Andaracha, and Najjo further to the east. There were also travelling agents for Wallamo and Sidamo. The methods of extracting rubber, under both the company and the regie, were described as primitive by one observer. The trees were tapped without regard to the possibility of later yields. Although the raw rubber, sold to agents mixed with a lot of impurities, was smoked and washed in hot water, it generally remained too

1. FO 371/594, chairman of co. to Clerk, 23.6.09.

2. FO 141/414,
Hervey to Grey, 25.11.08; FO 371/597, Hervey to Grey,
24.9.09; FO 371/594, Hervey to Grey, 10.6.09; FO 141/422,
Hervey to Grey, 30.1.09, 20.3.09, 27.3.09, 17.11.09.

dirty to fetch more than 1s.6d. per lb. in London.¹ All the same, the regie made a net profit of £30,000 in 1909. Ydlibi, who, as the British minister put it, had managed to make the Ethiopian ministers "sleeping partners in his business", strengthened his position even further by advancing money to the government for the purchase of machinery for a cartridge factory then being built in return for securing in advance a receipt for four years' rubber dues.²

The company remained unrepentant about its decision to dismiss Ydlibi, which had triggered off the whole controversy. Addressing the second annual general meeting of the company held in London on 7th September, 1909, the secretary general asserted, in the racist tone which was rarely lacking in the operations of British businessmen in Ethiopia, that "the company did not see their way to leave the absolute and sole control of the Company's local management in Syrian hands." He then proceeded to equate Syrian management with all that was shady and nefarious in the business world. He even called the arbitration of Dr. Zintgraff, which was on the whole favourable to the company, "a farce".³ Ydlibi for his part took court action against the company, claiming "damages for wrongful dismissal". But the court ruled against him.⁴

1. FO 141/423, Kelly report, 10.2.09.

2. FO 371/1043, encl. in Thesiger to Grey, 10.2.11.

3. The Times, 9.9.09. 11.9.09.

4. The Times, 14.10.10, 15.10.10, 18.10.10.

The significance for the Sudan of this legal and political battle revolving around the rubber concession was mainly in so far as it affected the route of export. Under the régie, export was almost entirely via Jibouti. British officials in Addis Ababa and elsewhere thus strove hard to have at least some of the rubber re-routed through Gambella. The governor of Upper Nile Province, Colonel G. Matthews, insisted that Minilik had an obligation to do so, as the trading post, which gave him half the customs, would languish if it were denied such free trade.¹ The main advantage to the Sudan treasury from the rubber trade, which passed almost exclusively in transit to Europe, was in terms of freight charges. In 1910, the régie began to be attracted by the cheaper transport charges of the Gambella route (£15 less per ton than the Jibouti route), as the rubber was mostly found in western Ethiopia.² Two years later, however, following a snub to its request for private steamers from the Sudan government and probably under pressure from the Ethiopian, the régie abandoned the Gambella route altogether.³ A few months later, Thesiger was pleading with Wingate to facilitate as much as possible the export of some 1000 kantar of rubber that Ydlibi was contemplating to send through Gambella. Ydlibi had requested an assurance that only régie rubber was to be exported, something that Wingate was ready to give. But he

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1. CRO Intel 2/24/191, Matthews to Amery, 11.1.09.
 2. CRO Intel 2/24/193, memo on Gambella trade, 1.12.10.
 3. CRO Intel 1/13/59, Thesiger to acting GG, 17.8.12.

could not accede to Ydlibi's further request for a certificate of the amount exported, for fear allegedly of the complications that would arise through loss of weight.¹

A matter of even greater concern to the British perhaps was the possibility that Ydlibi could sell the concession to a rival power and thereby create a threat to British influence in western Ethiopia - a possibility that cropped up more than once. Here again, British policy aimed more at preventing others from acquiring the concession and less at securing it themselves. In 1911, Ydlibi came to an arrangement with the Bank of Athens and a group of Greek merchants in Alexandria to transfer to them half the value of the concession for £80,000, half of which sum was to be paid immediately and the rest over a period of four years. The purchasers had even proceeded to form a syndicate with a capital of £40,000 to exploit their share of the concession. But the agreement had stipulated that the transfer was not valid until the official sanction of the Ethiopian government was obtained. And it was probably the failure to secure such a sanction that made it finally fall through.²

Increasingly, too, the rubber trade was showing a decline. This was partly a result of local conditions such as the negligence of the régie's agents.³ More fundamentally,

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1. CRO Intel 1/13/59, Thesiger to Wingate, 26.2.13; Wingate to Thesiger, 8.5.13; cf. FO 371/1044, Thesiger to Tilley, 12.11.11.
 2. FO 371/1293, encls. in Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 19.12.11; FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 22.2.13; FO 371/1294, Thesiger to Grey, 22.4.12.
 3. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 22.2.13.

it was a reflection of the world-wide slump in the rubber trade after the boom in 1910.¹ Thus export by the régie progressively declined from 177,152 lbs in 1910 to 132,187 lbs in 1911 and 85,175 lbs in 1912.² As the price of rubber continued to fall, the concession, on the security of which the Bank of Abyssinia had advanced some money to the régie, remained mortgaged to the bank.³ Ydlibi's efforts to sell the concession were thus often frustrated by his indebtedness to the bank. The whole business of the sale of the rubber concession in fact got very much mixed up with Ydlibi's attempt to dispose of another concession that he had secured from Minilik on 9th March, 1907, and which came to be known as the Baro concession.

The Baro Concession

The concession covered an extensive area along both banks of the river Baro and stretched from just below Gambella to just 2 kms. short of the boundary. The width on each side of the river was 2,400 metres. Over this area, Ydlibi was granted the right to grow plantations of coffee, tea, cotton, rubber, or any other agricultural products for a period of 75 years. He was entitled to hire Anyuua and Nuer labour on a wage not exceeding 4 MTD per month per person. The company

1. Sudan Herald, 19.7.13.

2. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 22.2.13.

3. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Kitchener, 16.10.13.

that was to be formed to exploit the concession would pay the Ethiopian government a sum of half a million dollars before starting its operations; thereafter it would pay 10% on all products except tea and rubber, on which it was to pay 20%. The concession was to be annulled if work did not start in two years' time.¹

Ydlibi's efforts to raise capital in London met considerable opposition from the Foreign Office. According to his daughter, this opposition even went to the extent of instigating a hostile press campaign against Ydlibi in Germany when he went there to attract German capital. When Ydlibi returned to Ethiopia, frustrated, Minilik was reportedly bitter about the hostility of the Foreign Office and exclaimed: "'Do they think we have no money in Ethiopia? We will ourselves form a Syndicate here.'"² The modification of the concession on 16th March, 1908, providing for the formation of an Ethiopian syndicate and giving Ydlibi on the whole more favourable terms, thus seems to have been a direct outcome of his futile mission in Europe. The new concession authorized Ydlibi to form in Addis Ababa a syndicate with a capital of 100,000 dollars and to be known as "The Gambella Lands Concession Syndicate (Ltd.)". The Ethiopian government renounced its claim for a royalty for a period of three years after the first harvest, and limited it to a 10% royalty on

1. FO 371/1293, encl. 2 in Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 11.1.12.

2. FO 371/11570, MayLouiso to Bentinck, 11.6.26.

the products thereafter. The half million dollar sum stipulated in the first concession was to be paid in annual installments of 10,000 dollars.¹ The statutes of the syndicate which came out nine months later, further broadened the scope of the syndicate's operations to include giving agricultural instruction to the Anyuua and Nuer, railway construction, steamer transport to and from the Sudan, general trade, and even lending and borrowing money. The syndicate's capital was also varied to 120,000 dollars.²

The syndicate in practice became more than just an ordinary business concern. It began to assume quasi-administrative functions. To the authorities in the Sudan, the syndicate was not only a respectable camouflage for a prosperous and notorious ivory trade but also the spearhead of Ethiopian government influence in the Baro salient, which they had customarily regarded as a kind of no-man's land, if not a Sudanese hinterland. The failure of the Bramly scheme was thus doubly poignant.³ They could not but resent the fact that Ydlibi had succeeded in securing the administrative control which they themselves had failed to achieve. Ydlibi's role in the débâcle of the Bramly scheme does indeed lend some justification to the resentment. According to his own testimony, Ydlibi got the concession for pointing out to Minilik the danger of British encroachment in the Baro salient. He claimed that he frustrated the Bramly scheme and had the rubber monopoly

1. FO 371/1293, encl.3 in Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 11.1.12.

2. FO 371/1293, encl.4 in Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 11.1.12.
pp.110-5;

3. See above; / CRO Intel 2/24/191, Matthews to ADI, 10.4.09, 28.4.09.

withdrawn from the Imperial Ethiopian Rubber Company in retaliation for the hard time that the British allegedly gave him in the Sudan.¹

Ydlibi did not wait long before he gave the maximum possible interpretation to the rights given him under the concession. He summoned the Anyuua headmen of the Baro banks, read them a royal decree, and distributed 12 bulls and some clothes. Ydlibi apparently impressed his authority on the Anyuua to such an extent that 40 Anyuua were killed in a subsequent skirmish when they refused to pay tribute to the traditional collector, claiming that they were then under Ydlibi.² In two instances, Ydlibi even reportedly passed death sentences.³ Yet, he did not seem to have any written authority for his exercise of administrative functions in the Anyuua country, unless the royal decree mentioned above gave him such powers. Article 5 of the concession only stipulated that the Ethiopian government would appoint the necessary officials to administer the district.⁴ According to Ras Tassamma, who could have seen the syndicate as nothing but a rival claimant on his authority and revenue, it in fact had no permission either to administer or to engage in the ivory trade.⁵ Apparently, Ydlibi based his ivory trading operations

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1. CRO Intel 2/24/192, Khalid to Matthews, July 1909.
 2. CRO Intel 2/24/191, Khalid to govr UNP, 25.3.09.
 3. FO 371/1293, encl. in Matsas to Elliot, 15.12.11.
 4. CRO Intel 2/24/193, Phipps to Thesiger, 26.6.10.
 5. CRO Intel 2/2/193, Thesiger to Phipps, 16.8.10; SIR 192, July 1910.

(if at all he needed justification) on an article in the statutes which gave him rather extensive powers "to exploit the lands by all possible means."¹ The methods of collecting ivory included confiscations from such Anyuaa leaders as Udial, and from Oromo hunters coming back with ivory from the Sudan, on the pretext that they had no permission to trade in ivory. The syndicate had the service of two Greek ivory smugglers, and even Tassama's soldiers are said to have sometimes assisted the syndicate in the seizures; in July 1909, some 100 kantar of confiscated ivory were sent to the governor.²

More to the letter of his statutory powers, Ydlibi began exploring the possibility of utilizing the steamer transport provision in the concession. He asked leave from Khartoum to import via Port Sudan shallow draught boats, which "will naturally have to fly the Abyssinian flag", as the syndicate was an Ethiopian concern.³ To this the civil secretary in Khartoum curtly replied that all transport between Khartoum and Gambella was and would continue to be carried out solely by the Sudan government.⁴ With regard to rubber, some 30,000 trees had been planted with conscript labour by 1912.⁵ A year later the number of trees, of both Cera and Para varieties (the first bearing after 3 years, the second after five), had grown to 77,000 and 10,000 respectively, A

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1. See CRO Intel 2/24/191, Matthews to ADI, 28.4.09.
 2. CRO Intel 2/24/191, report by Bimb. Wahab, 11.5.09; Matthews, 1.7.09; SIR 179, June 1909.
 3. CRO Intel 2/24/192, Ydlibi to Sudan agent (Cairo), 10.12.09.
 4. CRO Intel 2/24/192, Phipps to Ydlibi, 7.2.10.
 5. DUR 182/3/1, Asser to Wingate, 2.9.12.

sugar cane plantation was also started over an area of 200 acres, but Ydlibi's efforts to import a sugar refining plant from Germany was allegedly cut short by the outbreak of the war.¹ Cotton growing did not much pass the experimental stage, although some cotton grown from Egyptian seeds was once sent to Khartoum and is said to have fetched the highest price in the market.² Even Majid Abud's rather dubious policy (dubious in the light of his massacre of the Baro Anyuua) of giving agricultural instruction to the Anyuua appears to have been a belated attempt to implement one of the statutes of the concession, as Majid was Ydlibi's representative.³

But the Baro concession, like most other concessions in Ethiopia at the time, was probably more significant as a source of financial juggling and diplomatic rivalry than as a business concern. It was always a matter of anxiety to the British since it was too uncomfortably close to the Sudan boundary and its terms provided for the utilization of the waters of the Baro. Hence, the prevention of its falling into the hands of a hostile power remained a cardinal point of British policy. The syndicate had got off to a good start, with the emperor buying half the shares and other government officials, including Ras Tassamma and Nagadras Hayla Giyorgis, about a quarter.⁴ Thus it does not seem to have been merely

1. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, 22.2.13; FO 371/1878, Thesiger to Grey, 10.12.13; FO 371/11570, May Louiso to Bentinck, 11.6.26.

2. FO 371/4393, encl1 in Walker to Dodds, 11.3.20.

3. See above, p.143.

4. FO 371/1293, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 3.1.12; encl. in Matsas to Elliott, 15.12.11.

lack of funds that prompted Ydlibi to put the concession, with the approval of his Ethiopian partners, on the market. Late in 1911, news that a German bank was on the point of acquiring the concession set off a process of inquiries and objections among British policy makers. These did not stop until Hayla Giyorgis was persuaded to pledge that "The Ethiopian Government see no objection to the Syndicate ... coming to an understanding with and giving the first preference to an English Company."¹

But the English company did not materialize until some years later. True enough, Thesiger was excited by the possibilities of the concession, and in particular that of railway communication between western Ethiopia and the Sudan, which would have meant an appreciable increase in the volume of Gambella trade.² But both the Foreign Office and the Sudan government regarded political stability in Ethiopia as a necessary precondition for British investment.³ Further, not only were some of the reports on the workings of the concession unfavourable,⁴ but the legal position of the concession itself was dubious as the Bank of Abyssinia claimed a lien on it for Ydlibi's debt.⁵ In 1920, Ydlibi had to appeal to

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1. FO 371/1293, Hayla Giyorgis to Doughty-Wylie, 7.1.12; Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 3.1.12. See also FO 371/1044, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 16.11.11; Langley to Doughty-Wylie, 22.11.11; Kitchener to Grey, 11.12.11.
 2. FO 371/1878, Thesiger to Grey, 10.12.13.
 3. Minutes on above; FO 371/1571, Kitchener to Grey, 30.5.13.
 4. FO 371/4393, encl. in Stack to Allenby, 27.6.26; Dodds to FO, 7.3.20.
 5. FO 371/4393, memo by Bank of Abyssinia, 15.5.20; FO 371/4397, Norton, Rose & Co. to FO, 11.6.20. Cf., however, FO 371/4393, Enever to FO, 30.3.20.

the Foreign Office to lift what he regarded as its ban on the concession and to let interested British financial groups purchase it. He said: "I used to attribute the hesitant attitude of the [British] Government on that point to the inadvisability of investing large capital in a semi-feudal country like Ethiopia, but those suppositions have now been dispelled by the authorisation of the formation of the Abyssinian Corporation with a capital of no less than £1,000,000."¹ But the Abyssinian Corporation, the epitome of the aggressive phase of British capitalism in Ethiopia, itself soon met a major débâcle, further reinforcing the old trend of hesitation and reluctance.

The Abyssinian Corporation

This new phase in the history of British investment in Ethiopia, so different from the pre-emptive character of the earlier years, began to emerge towards the end of the First World War. Two financial groups, Villiers-Janson and Backhouse-Ramsden, developed a keen interest in investing in the country. The latter was more attracted by the mining potential. It was the former that came to be identified with what developed into the Abyssinian Corporation. And few other persons probably gave a more articulate expression of this new British business offensive than the minister in Addis Ababa, Thesiger. In a remarkable "Memorandum on the Development of Abyssinian Trade,"

1. FO 371/4393, encl. in Enever to FO, 17.11.20.

the minister forcefully argued the urgent need for the amalgamation of the various British concerns then competing with one another in Ethiopia, in view of the imminent intensification of international rivalry for markets and raw materials after the end of the war. True to his tradition, he was particularly apprehensive of German and Austrian competition. What he envisaged hopefully was therefore the merger of the two above-mentioned financial groups; the amalgamation of the leading British firms operating in Ethiopia, including Gerolimato and John Nicholas & Co. (both active in western Ethiopia), under a syndicate; and the re-organization of the Bank of Abyssinia and the increase of its capital. In the agricultural sphere, aside from the concession in Harar that was then being negotiated with Ras Tafari by the representative of the Fanti Syndicate, sponsored by the Villiers financial group, the same syndicate could also acquire the Baro concession. "Whatever the legal aspect of the question of ownership may be," Thesiger argued, "there is no doubt of the real value of the concession itself and it ought never to be allowed to fall into any but British hands, since the purchasers of this concession will some day hold in their hands the key to all the Sudan-Abyssinian trade."¹

What apparently inspired the minister's optimism and drive were the activities of the Fanti Syndicate, and more particularly its director, Colonel Villiers, who throughout

1. FO 371/3125, encl. in Thesiger to Balfour, 10.6.18.

1918 tirelessly bombarded the Foreign Office with his confident assessment of the enormous prospects Ethiopia had in store for British enterprise. From his experience in East Africa, where the syndicate had been engaged in railway construction and stock breeding,¹ he brought a rare regional perspective. As he wrote in one of his letters, "the development of the high plateau in Western Abyssinia is very important as an extension and near neighbour of British East Africa and also of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan."² "Every possible encouragement should be given to the [Ethiopian] Government and people," he stated with characteristic fervour, "to grow produce and it should be pointed out to them what a unique opportunity this time presents to the people of Abyssinia to get their produce on the European Market, and to get such return that they will reap great advantages and be able to buy European commodities and agricultural machinery in return."³ Like Thesiger, Villiers was worried about the danger of German competition after the war.⁴ But he was equally wary of too open identification of the British government with business interests, although he had no doubts about the special destiny of Britain to conduct the "policy of protection, friendship and peaceful penetration" which he considered a prescription for success in Ethiopia.

1. FO 371/3125, Villiers to Sperling, 30.12.17.

2. FO 371/3125, Villiers to Sperling, 18.3.18; cf. Villiers to Sperling, 23.4.18.

3. FO 371/3125, Villiers to Holmes, 10.4.18.

4. FO 371/3125, Villiers to Sperling, 30.12.17.

To quote once more from the colonel's lucid exposition: "this [i.e. the British] Empire's Colonial History has taught it many lessons in the management of Native Races, and with regard to Abyssinia, every possible precaution must be taken to prevent the Abyssinian Government and people becoming suspicious of British official interference in their country. The development of the country can only take place by means of Trading, Agricultural and Mining Companies, plus perhaps independent settlers at a later date; absolutely independent of the British Government, but quietly supported by that Government."¹

That was the clever formula by which the Foreign Office gently pushed the enterprise through the corridors of the Treasury in the not so smooth struggle to authorize the issue of capital. That also was the source of the Foreign Office's embarrassment when the disastrous fate of the corporation blazed across the pages of some of London papers; The National News came out with the headline: "A Grave Foreign Office Scandal."² But this is anticipating events. All was enthusiasm during or immediately after the war. Very much in tune with the spirit of the times, for example, was an article that appeared in The Near East (London), on 6th December, 1918, which deplored the low volume of trade between Ethiopia and Britain and castigated British firms for their lack of foresight in the past. At the same time, it welcomed the new change of attitude and expressed confidently that "no country

1. FO 371/3125, Villiers' memo, 29.5.18.

2. FO 371/4400, encl., 12.12.20; cf. FO 371/5509, FO minutes, 7.11.21, 8.11.21.

holds out greater prospects for enterprise than Abyssinia." Again inevitably, the article lamented the advance that German and Austrian traders had made on their British rivals in capturing the Ethiopian market, and it attempted to help reverse this by citing for the information of British firms a list of the items that were imported from Germany and Austria.

The Abyssinian Corporation was expected to set all this right. The first step towards this end was considered to be the merger of all the major British trading firms, "to get a practical monopoly of the Abyssinian trade and keep the Germans out," as Thesiger put it.¹ Particular attention was paid to firms like Gerolimato who were active in Ethio-Sudanese trade. Another firm, Clayton, Ghaleb & Co., had also expressed in May 1918 willingness to work in partnership with or sell its interests to the Fanti Syndicate.² Less enthusiastic were John Nicholas & Co., They wavered a bit and considered staying out, confident that their wider experience of trading conditions in Ethiopia would serve them better than the imposing capital of the new company. With the business slump in mind, John Nicholas himself forecast rather prophetically that the syndicate "will soon find out their mistake in subscribing such an enormous Capital, as most of it will be lying idle and a very insignificant dividend,

1. FO 141/485, Thesiger to high commissioner (Cairo), 21.6.18.

2. FO 371/3125, Holmes to syndicate, 22.5.18.

if any, could be allotted to the shareholders."¹ Eventually, though, they did join, subscribing for 5000 shares of £1 each, while Gerolimato and his partner Timoleon Armanzas subscribed for over 53,000 shares.²

But the launching of the company continued to be bogged down in financial complications in London on the question of issuing shares.³ It was not until April 1919 that the Abyssinian Corporation Ltd., as the company came to be known, was officially inaugurated with a capital of £1,005,000. Five thousand deferred shares of £1 each were allotted to the Fanti Syndicate in recognition of their services in the negotiations and preliminary arrangements.⁴ The syndicate in return agreed to place at the corporation's disposal the business experience and information it had acquired in Ethiopia as well as the services of its director, Major Holmes.⁵ An impressive list of objectives that the corporation was to pursue, as enumerated in the memorandum of association, included not only trade and investment, but also acquiring concessions, charters and grants; organizing prospecting expeditions and working mines; banking; and railway construction.⁶ Nonetheless, the initial response

1. FO 141/485, John to Kelly Trading Co., 16.8.18; cf. J. Nicholas & Co. to Baldassare, 5.7.18, 19.7.18.

2. The Times, 3.12.20; BT 31/24271/39, 27.6.24.

3. FO 371/3495, Thesiger to Curzon, 19.3.19.

4. FO 371/3495, prospectus of Abyssinian Corp., 14.4.19.

5. BT 31/24271, 26.5.19.

6. BT 31/24271/4.

from the investors to the issue of shares was poor.¹ The British legation in Addis Ababa also started advising the corporation to sound a low key in its projects as the co-operation of Ras Tafari, who had been accused of selling the country, would not be so forthcoming.² Subsequently, the legation wrote to Tafari assuring him that rumours that the British government were trading in the guise of the corporation were false and slanderous.³ The French, in the person of Mr. Michel, president of the Compagnie Afrique Orientale (based in Jibouti), were said to have been active in pointing out to Tafari that the Abyssinian Corporation and the Abyssinian Development Syndicate, which was formed about the same time with mining interests in the Bela Shangul region, were both parts of a grand British design to draw the trade of western and southwestern Ethiopian, and possibly that of northern Ethiopia too, towards Gambella, thereby directly undermining his revenue from trade passing through the capital.⁴ But Tafari does not seem to have been very much swayed by the French and even offered to be a director of the corporation.⁵

The secretary of the corporation was confidence

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1. The Times, 6.6.19.
 2. FO 371/3495, Campbell to Curzon, 21.7.19; Cf. above, p.54.
 3. FO 371/3495, Campbell to Tafari, 12.8.19.
 4. FO 371/4390, Dodds to Curzon, 19.4.20; cf. US 884.00/106, Skinner to sec. of st., 21.1.21.
 5. The Times, 3.12.20.

itself when he addressed the shareholders in September. After paying tribute to Thesiger's foresight and outlining the unique role of the corporation as the medium between British capital and Ethiopian resources, he concluded: "I have every confidence that at the first annual meeting we shall be able to report that the work which has been well begun will have been successfully continued."¹ But the confidence was short-lived. Scarcely a year had elapsed before reports that the corporation was faring badly began to reach London. By November 1920, the corporation had made a loss of nearly £150,000, excluding the inevitable expenses incurred in launching the company.² By early 1921, its bank overdrafts in Khartoum and Addis Ababa totalled over £100,000.³ By April of the same year, Villiers was considering the need to draw French money into the corporation, although the idea of French participation had been brusquely rejected earlier.⁴ Meanwhile, the debit balance continued to rise until it reached the sum of £454,202 in 1924.⁵ Finally, in 1926, the interests of the corporation were bought by Constantine & Co., a Greek company based in Khartoum and whose manager in Ethiopia was none other than the Greek Timoleon Armanzas. The British minister wrote the epitaph in a tone perhaps of appropriate

1. The Times, 14.9.19.

2. The Times, 25.11.20, 3.12.20.

3. FO 371/5502, Wolmer to Sperling, 21.1.21.

4. FO 371/5502, Villiers to Sperling, 22.4.21; cf. FO 371/3125, Sperling to Villiers, 9.7.18.

5. The Times, 6.6.24.

solemnity, if not complete accuracy: "Thus ends a concern which, through bad management, has brought little credit to British enterprise in a country where Great Britain hangs so far behind her competitors."¹

Why the dramatic collapse? The two most readily cited reasons were the fall in the exchange value of the pound in relation to the dollar, which to the corporation meant the rise in the cost of Ethiopian products and of their transport, and the general fall in the world market prices of commodities like hides, coffee, and cotton goods in which the corporation was mainly dealing.² The shareholders' committee, in a report of 6th July, 1921, gave a more comprehensive explanation of the problem, indicating not only the exchange and price fluctuations but also the lack of experience and a definite trading policy by the board and poor management by the director, C. F. Rey, who, oblivious to the prevailing price and exchange situation, made heavy purchases of the commodities hit by the price changes as well as of MT D.³ The report also cited the disagreement that developed between the British manager, Rey, and the corporation's Greek agent in western Ethiopia, Timoleon Armanzas, who was already a well-established figure in Gambella trade.

It was this last point of the general problem of British business operations in Ethiopia, a theme which has

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1. FO 371/11574, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 31.5.26.
 2. The Times, 25.11.20, 3.12.20.
 3. FO 371/5502, encl. in Abyss. Corp. to FO, 12.7.21.

been touched on more than once in this study, that is more eloquently developed by an Ethiopian observer of the time, Hakim Workinah (alias Dr. Martin). British firms failed in Ethiopia, he wrote in 1922, "because they want to start business on a large and expensive scale, employing unnecessarily large and highly paid staffs; because they are too proud to accommodate and acquaint themselves with the conditions of the trade of the country; because they are too impatient of the working of the Government Departments, which are certainly slow and dilatory in their methods; in short because the English officials try to do business and behave as officials."¹ Workinah was not alone in his assessment. Two successive British ministers echoed the same sentiment as they reflected mournfully over the edge that Greek, Armenian, Arab, and Indian merchants had on the British in Ethiopian trade. Russell in 1923:

"They [i.e. the Greeks et al.] work with a minimum of overhead charges. They carry on their business on premises and with a staff that would not meet the ideas of a British firm. Their personal expenses are negligible. Their annual turnover may amount at the most to a few thousand pounds, and they are content to wait six months to take a profit of $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. In my opinion conditions in Abyssinia must undergo a radical change before the country can provide a profitable field for the investment of British capital."²

His successor, Bentinck, later continued the story with even greater bitterness:

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1. Westminster Gazette, 16.8.22.
 2. FO 371/8910, Russell to Curzon, 1.10.23.

"Methods repugnant to an English merchant make it almost impossible to compete with low-class Greeks, Italians, and certain Indians and Arabs. Besides, the Englishman, being far more luxurious, is unable to live as cheaply as do his rivals."¹

Thus, over and above the price and exchange fluctuations, there were more fundamental problems that British capital had to overcome. Ethiopia in short was not ready for the full-scale capitalist penetration that projects like the Abyssinian Corporation represented. The Ethiopian economy was not yet open to the full scale assault of world capital which was to come decades later. The Greeks, Armenians, etc., succeeded because they had the temperamental and organizational flexibility to operate in an inherently pre-capitalist society. It was a milieu of patronage and backsheesh, not just of the impersonal and stark reality of the market; of adjustment and patience, not of precision and quick profits.

Mining Concessions

The great attraction of western Ethiopia, particularly the Bela Shangul region and the Oromo country further south, has through the centuries been its gold deposits. The famous Sasu, source of Gold supply for the Aksumite empire, has been traced to this region.² More recently, in the nineteenth

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1. FO 371/12353, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 10.9.27; cf. The Times, *27.3.26.
 2. Eth. Min. of Mines, NC 36-8/200/H4r, Muhlen report (August 1937), p. 59; Pankhurst, p. 232; G.A. Wainwright, "Cosmas and the Gold Trade of Fazogai", Man, XLII (1942) no.30; A.J. Arkell, "Cosmas and the Gold Trade of Fazogai", Man, XLIV (1944), no.24.

century, the famed alluvial gold of the Sa'id, as well as the quest for slaves, was an important factor in drawing Muhammad Ali of Egypt to the region subsequent to his conquest of the Sudan. From their headquarters at Fazughli, the Egyptian forces tried to exploit the gold deposits as fully as possible. They relied on European technical assistance, both private and governmental. In the 1840's, for example, two young Egyptians were sent to Russia for training and a gold-washing mill was installed in the Tumat river. But the amount of gold extracted fell far short of the wild anticipations of the conquerors.¹

Naturally, control of this legendary eldorado was a primary consideration in British policy after the fall of the Mahdist state. Much of the haggling over this section of the frontier during the boundary negotiations between Minilik and Harrington centered on the very issue of gold. In the end, when Harrington conceded Minilik's claim, he did so only after squeezing from the emperor an assurance that priority to exploit the deposits would be given to British capital.² A concession was duly granted to a British national, George W. Lane, in January 1900. The British traveller and writer, Herbert Weld-Blundell, was also given a prospecting lease very near the same area three years later. But both concessions stayed dormant until some twenty years later, when they became

1. L.Y. Kubbel, "The Expedition of Y.P. Kovalevsky to Egypt and the Sudan in 1847-1848," Russia in Africa (Moscow, 1966), pp. 112ff, 120; cf. Marno, p. 55; Richard Hill, Egypt in the Sudan, 1820-1881 (London, 1959), pp. 15, 33, 67, 82-83.

2. See above, p. 69.

a subject of mutual bickering because of their overlapping.

Meanwhile, it was left to more enterprising, if not financially so viable, groups and individuals to venture on gold prospecting. The first of this was Ilg, Minilik's adviser. But the most dazzling and baffling of them all was the Italian, Alberto Prasso, who was to the mining world in Ethiopia what Ydlibi was to the world of commerce and agricultural concessions. Ilg obtained the concession covering what was believed to be an ancient mine at Najjo in 1899.¹ A company with a capital of 1 million francs was formed at Antwerp in 1901 to exploit the concession; much of the capital was Italian. The annual value of gold extracted came to about 200,000 dollars; the company did not employ wage labourers but bought the gold from some 500 "tributaries" who did their own washing. In 1910, the company was liquidated and the concession was acquired by a German firm, Deutsches Syndikat für Abessinien.²

The Prasso concession had a much more eventful career. There were in fact two concessions, one along the Baro river

1. E. Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3rd ed. (London, 1909), Vol. II, p. 463. Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia, p. 232, gives the date as 25 Dec. 1898.
2. Pankhurst, pp. 232-33; Geog. Zeit., v. 7 (1901), p. 528; Bartleet, p. 110; Jean Duchesne-Fournet, Mission en Ethiopie (1901-1903), tome I (Paris, 1909), pp. 205-06, 209; cf. Lamberto Vannutelli, "L'Uallega e l'industria mineraria," Bolletino della Societa Geografica Italiana, serie 4, vol. IV (Roma, 1903) 569ff, and P. Riboni, "Alcune altre notizie sulle miniere d'oro dell Uallaga," in the same no. of same journal, pp. 778-80.

and the other along the Birbir. The Baro concession was first given in January 1905 and empowered Prasso to prospect for gold for a period of three years.¹ It was subsequently renewed more than once, first in 1909 and then 1913. Again in 1919, the concession was renewed and confirmed in a more elaborate form. This authorized Prasso to extract "gold, silver, platinum or other minerals" from the subsoil for a period of fifty years, in return for a 10% duty on net profit to the Ethiopian government.² Further renewals took place in 1924 and 1930.³ In 1926, a French company, the "Société Minière des Concessions Prasso en Abyssinie", took over both concessions with the sanction of the Ethiopian government. The company had a capital of 12,000,000 francs, and nearly two-thirds of the shares were owned by Prasso himself. The southern part of the Yubdo mines, as the Birbir concession was known, was acquired by two British companies, the Birbir Mines Ltd. and the Western Abyssinian Mining Syndicate, in the early 1930's.⁴

The most interesting aspect of the whole story was the tenacity with which Prasso himself survived all the various transmutations of the concession. It was hawked around and renewed from time to time; but Prasso always remained at the centre of the stage, as owner, major share holder, or director-

1. FO 371/193, encl. 2 in Hohler to Grey, 7.9.07.

2. FO 371/3499, encl. in Campbell to Curzon, 4.6.19; cf. Pankhurst, p.235.

3. Pankhurst, p. 236; FO 371/16993, encl. in Marshall to Mack, 23.6.33.

4. Ibid.; SMR 69, Sept-Oct 1934; FO 371/18029, Farrer to Thompson, 21.11.34.

general of the company formed to work the concession. Like Ydlibi, he had the unique capacity to dispose of a concession and yet go on owning it - to eat his cake and have it, as it were. It is not therefore surprising that the two masters in concession-hunting were once involved in a legal squabble. In December 1906, Prasso gave an option over his concession along the Baro to Ydlibi, who claimed to represent an Eastern Development Syndicate (Limited). Apparently, Ydlibi not only failed to utilize his option within the stipulated six month period but also disappeared with the original of the concession.¹ The Italian charge d'affaires in Addis Ababa went to the extent of alleging that Ydlibi used the document to persuade Minilik to give him another concession in its place. This seems to be a confusion with the agricultural concession that Ydlibi obtained in March 1907, which was altogether different from Prasso's mining concession; the latter was in any case renewed two years later.

As in the case of Ydlibi's Baro concession, too, the British could scarcely ignore the potential significance of the Prasso concession, as Gambella was the natural exit of minerals extracted in that region. The hope persisted until 1927 - and no doubt even later than that - that some spectacular mineral find would give a boost to Gambella, dependent as it so precariously was on the vagaries of the coffee trade.² More than one British financial group tried to lay their hands on

1. FO 371/193, encls. 1 & 3 in Hohler to Grey, 7.9.07.

2. FO 371/12339, Walker to Bentinck, 8.6.27; cf. FO 371/1044, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 25.9.11.

the concession. In 1913-14, two such groups, Bull & Duncan and Backhouse, were competing for it and sounding the Foreign Office as to the legal position of the concession. As it happened, two cases were pending in Alexandria at the time, both involving Prasso: one against the Greek merchant, Zervudachi, and the other against Prasso's Italian partner, Panelli. Prasso had apparently sold the rights of his concession to both.¹ Kitchener, on behalf of the Sudan government, welcomed the efforts to acquire the concession but was wary of too much official identification with the enterprise in view of the suspicion of Sudan government intentions then prevailing in Ethiopia.²

In the short period of general euphoria and optimism (just before the end of the First World War and immediately after it) which gave birth to such ambitious ventures as the Abyssinian Corporation, there were more determined efforts by British capital to acquire the Prasso concession. Prasso made his concession even more tantalizing by circulating rumours of the discovery of wolfram (very much in demand during the war) in the concession zone.³ It was a Mr. Janson, who was also associated with Colonel Villiers of Fanti Syndicate and later Abyssinian Corporation fame, who first made

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1. FO 371/1572, Bull & Duncan to FO, 14.10.13; 31.10.13; FO 371/1878, Thesiger to Grey, 12.12.13.
 2. FO 371/1878, Kitchener to Grey, 27.12.13; see above, pp. 128-30.
 3. FO 371/2858, FO minutes, 23.8.17; Bacon to FO, 27.9.17.

a serious effort to secure the concession. He received warm encouragement from the Foreign Office but a chilly reaction from both Consul Walker and Thesiger, who both presented Prasso as a man of unsavoury reputation.¹ The Ramsden-Backhouse group then took over the bid and in fact appear to have purchased the concession in the Baro region in February 1918 for a sum of £12,000.² The renewal of the concession by Ras Tafari in May 1919 and in a much fuller form also seems to have been in response to the group's request.³ But, for some reason, the group did not pursue the matter much further.⁴ Later efforts by British companies faced the stumbling block of the Anglo-Italian agreement of 1925 (to be discussed in more detail below), by which Britain committed herself, in return for Italian support in securing the Tana concession, not to encourage British enterprises to seek or acquire concessions in western Ethiopia, which was declared an exclusive zone of Italian economic influence.⁵ Eventually, as we have seen, it was a French company that got hold of the concession, although two British firms later acquired portions.

It is significant that some members of the Ethiopian ruling class also started developing an active interest in

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1. FO 371/2856, Janson to Sperling, 19.10.17; FO to Janson, 27.10.17; Thesiger to Balfour, 14.11.17; DUR 395/5, encl. in Symes to Stack, 16.12.17.
 2. CRO Intel 1/13/61, encl. in Walker to Thesiger, 7.5.18.
 3. FO 371/3499, Thesiger to FO, 23.2.19; Campbell to Curzon, 4.6.19.
 4. FO 371/3499, Campbell to Curzon, 4.6.19.
 5. FO 371/11570, Johnson Matthey & Co to FO, 6.1.26; Murray to Johnson Matthey & Co., 7.1.26; Murray to Bentinck, 11.1.26.

exploiting the mineral deposits. The most notable of these were Hakim Workinah, who had spent a good deal of his earlier life in India, and Blatta Deressa, a member of the Oromo aristocracy of Wallaga whose articles in Birhanina Salam, to which he was a regular contributor, constantly emphasized the need for breaking out of the medieval groove within which Ethiopian society had atrophied and for introducing more rational, i.e. capitalist, relations of production. Part of the working force at the Deressa-Workinah mines, at Kope, were slaves set free by Deressa; the rest were Oromo peasants. About 300 workers were said to have been engaged in the mines in 1931. Tafari himself seemed to have had a share in them. In any case, the concession for the Kope mines, which continued to be disputed by Prasso on the ground that it impinged on territory already conceded to him, was granted by the heir to the throne.¹

There was in general a growing awareness of the mineral wealth that had attracted so many foreigners and of the need to exploit it to the full. An article in Birhanina Salam in 1928, after citing the example of how platinum was discovered in Wallaga accidentally by a certain Zappa, a partner of Prasso until they quarrelled over shares, urged provincial governors to redouble their vigilance and zeal in locating and identifying potential mining sites; it also argued the need

1. FO 371/15385, Barton to Henderson, 3.8.31; Bartleet, passim; FO 371/12339, Walker to Bentinck, 8.6.27; Huyn, p.80; Eth. Min. of Mines, NC 36-8/200/H4r, Mühlen report, 1937; FO 371/13103, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 22.12.27; FO 371/13838, Dunbar to FO, 27.1.29.

for a geological map of the country.¹ In the late 20's and early 30's, the government promulgated a series of laws to regulate the extraction and export of minerals. The first decree, in November 1929, made the prospecting for or extracting of platinum, gold, and other minerals as well as their export without due government permits illegal. Fines of 500-2000 dollars plus the confiscation of the minerals was found in their possession were imposed on trespassers.² A further decree promulgated on 18th February, 1930, made the transfer of concession rights without the approval of the government illegal; violation would result in the annulment of the concession.³ On 18th May, 1931, an awaj (decree) was announced barring all concessionaires from prospecting or extracting in river beds, unless they had explicit permission in their concessions to do so.⁴ Some two months earlier, on 3rd March, 1931, it had already been decreed that the Department of Mines in Addis Ababa had sole authority to issue permits for prospecting for or extracting minerals throughout the empire. Permits given or to be given by provincial governors or rulers and private landlords were declared null and void.⁵

But it was not so much the pretensions of regional rulers to grant concessions on their own, as their obstruction of prospectors with concessions from the central government,

1. B.S., 15.11.28.

2. B.S., 5.12.29.

3. B.S., 20.2.30.

4. B.S., 21.5.31.

5. B.S., 19.3.31.

that was to worry the authorities in Addis Ababa. The case of Muhammad Wad Mahmud and the Abyssinian Development Syndicate is a good example of this. The whole thing started after the end of the war when the Lane and Weld-Blundell concessions, given at the turn of the century, were resurrected from oblivion and pushed forward by concerned groups and individuals. One of them was Weld-Blundell himself, who spoke not only on his behalf but also as chairman of the North East African Exploration Co. Ltd. which had acquired the Lane concession. The company's scheme was not confined to gold prospecting in Khomosha district; it also had a vision of the high plateau of Mandi further to the east serving as a sanatorium for the whites of the Gezira.¹ At about the same time, two British companies, the Sudan Goldfields Co. and the Abyssinian Development Syndicate, were seeking concessions to prospect in the same district. In April 1919, Tafari granted the Sudan Goldfields Co. permission to prospect the Dul area; the company later came to an understanding with the Abyssinian Development Syndicate.² But the duplication of British interests continued to worry the legation in Addis Ababa at a time when it was arguing for a concerted business drive.³ Finally, the syndicate and the Sudan [i.e. North East African?] took a long time to materialise. [Impact of waiting for

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1. FO 371/3496, sec. of North East Africa Exploration co. to FO, 11.2.19; Weld-Blundell to FO, 10.1.19.
 2. FO 371/3499, Thesiger to FO, 1.4.19; Milne to FO, 2.12.19; FO 371/5506, Hatton to London Office, 24.4.21.
 3. See above; FO 371/3496, Campbell to Curzon, 22.6.19.

Exploration Company also agreed to amalgamate their interests. It was thereafter the syndicate, which seemed to enjoy the kind of Foreign Office patronage that the Abyssinian Corporation did, that dominated the field, and it was its representatives who experienced a dramatic confrontation with Muhammad Wad Mahmud.

The first attempt to prospect, in accordance with the permission from Tafari, was made in March 1920 by a Mr. Bethune Williams. But the expedition was abandoned on the advice of the Sudan government inspector at Kurmuk, who could not vouch for its safety as Muhammad's reaction to his letter announcing Williams's arrival was hostile and as the Khomosha chief was moreover engaged in raiding at the time.¹ Muhammad later wrote that he would allow the prospecting to be carried out only if an Ethiopian official above the rank of Dajach Kumsa, the governor of eastern Wallaga and for long the overlord of the Bela Shangul region, came to him with orders to that effect from Addis Ababa.² Thereafter the syndicate's representatives started pressing Tafari to send a punitive expedition under the leadership of Sheikh Khojali to subdue Muhammad once and for all and facilitate the undertaking of the prospecting mission. This was granted but the expedition took a long time to materialize. Impatient of waiting for Sheikh Khojali's force, Hatton and Kitto, the employees of

1. FO 371/5506, Hatton to London Office, 24.4.21.

2. CRO Intel 2/23/186, Muhammad to ~~mamur~~ Kurmuk, 31.5.20.

the syndicate who were waiting in the wings, decided to make yet another attempt to enter Muhammad's country. When the two men arrived at Muhammad's village in April 1921, after forcing their way through the passive resistance of the inhabitants all along, they were treated to a long denunciation of both the British government and Khojali. They complained about the obstruction to Williams the previous year, which allegedly cost the syndicate some £6000, and asked to be permitted to prospect. Muhammad replied that they should have a "dania" (literally a judge, but here in the generic sense of official) from the central government with them and that they would be allowed to work on condition that they paid royalties to him, as he was king of that country. He refused to acknowledge the authority of the passes given them by Tafari because Muhammad's name was not explicitly mentioned in the text. The party then returned to Khartoum. Hatton expressed his frustration brilliantly when he wrote to Backhouse: "There must still be plenty of countries in which to the hazard of finding mineral wealth is not added the irritating handicap of wasting money through the tomfoolery [sic] of a comic opera Government."¹

It was not until towards the end of May that Khojali, who all the while had been in Addis Ababa, was finally said to have left for Khomasha with 2000 men. The Sudan government also sent troops to the frontier to reinforce the

1. FO 371/5506, Hatton to Backhouse, 25.4.21, 24.4.21.

Kurmuk garrison and patrol the boundary. But the troops were withdrawn and replaced with anti-slavery police when it became evident that Khojali was still too far away, rains made patrolling difficult, and fever and horse sickness spread. Khojali's main problem seems to have been shortage of men partially caused, according to one source, by the refusal of Kumsa, who was allegedly bribed by Muhammad, to contribute 1000 men when requested.¹ In the end, however, the combined force of Khojali and Dajach Yigazu, the new governor of Sayo, was able to defeat and capture Muhammad Wad Mahmud in February 1922. Khojali extended his authority over Khomosha.² Muhammad was kept in detention until August 1928. Those of his followers who had not surrendered or who had not been captured engaged in slaving raids in the intervening years.³ The Abyssinian Development Syndicate continued its futile quest for compensation from the Ethiopian government for the abortive expeditions, a quest which did not have the backing of the Foreign Office.⁴

The Anglo-Italian Khojali's own utilization of the Sa'id's rich mineral resources was characterized more by cunning than defiance. His rise to pre-eminence in the region has often been ascribed, at least in part, to his skilful use of this

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1. FO 371/5504, Jackson to Allenby, 17.7.21; SMIR 322, 323, 324, and 326-May-July & Sept. 1921.
 2. SMIR 331 & 332, Feb. & Mar. 1922.
 3. SMIR 401, Dec. 1927; SMIR 409, Aug. 1928.
 4. FO 371/7149, Sperling to Backhouse, 10.10.22; Lowe to Sperling, 13.12.22; FO 371/8407, Russell, 18.4.23; Backhouse to Sperling, 15.6.23.

natural wealth. When he died in 1938, his riches were valued at £E 100,000.¹ His confidence in the power of gold was absolute: he expressed regret when Emperor Haile Selassie fled the country during the Italian invasion in 1936 via Jibouti instead of the Sa'id; he felt that they could have taken enough gold to bribe the member states of the League of Nations and journalists to raise an outcry against the invaders and restore Ethiopia's independence.² Some time in the 20's, Khojali also secured a concession in partnership with Dajach Dasta Dantaw, Tafari's son-in-law, and Asfa Wassan, Tafari's eldest son, whose name was apparently used for a share which his father might have actually owned, as he was then only about 12 years old.³ In 1929, a group of foreign industrial houses sought to acquire the concession. Although not much came of the scheme, Khojali tried to retaliate for the imprisonment of his wife by the Sudan authorities by excluding British capital from the concession.⁴

The Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1925

The failure of the Abyssinian Corporation and the

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1. Arkell, "Gold Trade of Fazogli".
 2. Bajirond Taddassa, Ya-Beni Shangul Guzona Ya-Sheikh Khojali Al-Hasan Asazañ Mot, Amh. Mss., p.14.
 3. Cf. above, p. 357.
 4. FO 371/13839, Dunbar to Chamberlain, 4.3.29, 4.2.29.

Abyssinian Development Syndicate, the two most remarkable examples of the post-war British drive to invest in Ethiopia, introduced a general mood of caution and pessimism among British financial circles. Consuls, ministers, and Foreign Office men did not go out of their way to relieve the gloomy assessment of business prospects in Ethiopia. "The catastrophe of the Abyssinian Corporation," wrote Walker, "is a lamentable proof that there is no opening here for British businessmen."¹ The minister echoed the same sentiments:

"In my opinion conditions in Abyssinia must undergo a radical change before the country can provide a profitable field for the investment of British capital."² As far as British investment in western Ethiopia was concerned, the Anglo-Italian agreement of 1925 drove the last nail into the coffin, so to say.

By the terms of this agreement, which was in the form of exchange of letters in December 1925 between Mussolini and the British ambassador in Rome, Sir R. Graham, the British government agreed that "In the event of His Majesty's Government, with the valued assistance of the Italian Government, obtaining from the Abyssinian Government the desired concession on Lake Tsana, they are also prepared to recognize an exclusive Italian economic influence in the west of Abyssinia and in the whole of the territory to be crossed by the above-mentioned

1. FO 371/8407, Walker to Russell, 19.9.23.

2. FO 371/8410, Russell to Curzon, 1.10.23 ;
cf. FO 371/7145, minutes on Fraser to Darley, 4.3.22.

and Sudan government interests in Ethiopia, the agreement was railway [linking Eritrea with Italian Somaliland and passing probably the most significant settlement concluded by the west of Addis Ababa]".¹

The reason for what in effect became Britain's surrender of investment opportunities in western Ethiopia thus lay in the single most important consideration of its imperial policy in the country in this period: the Tana concession. The history of the quest for this concession has been outlined briefly in the introduction. What gave the matter fresh urgency in the early 20's was the pressure exerted by men of the Lancashire cotton industry, who felt that the acquiring of the concession for a dam on the lake was vital to achieve the maximum development of the Gezira. On instigation from the Board of Trade, the Foreign Office appointed a committee to examine the reasons for the failure of the British government to secure the concession in the preceding two decades. The committee felt that the most important factor was Italian opposition.² The 1925 agreement was thus intended to buy off that opposition. The Italians had in fact offered much earlier, in November 1919, the terms later agreed upon; but they were not then taken up by the British because Italian control of the lake as the agreement envisaged would jeopardize vital interests of the Sudan. In 1925, so Graham claimed, the British were more confident of Italian good intentions.³

Aside from its implication for British investment

1. A & P, Vol. 15 (1926)

2. FO 371/15385, record of conversation between Barton & Murray, 15.4.31.

3. A & P, Vol. 15 (1926)

and Sudan government interests in Ethiopia, the agreement was probably the most significant settlement concluded by the colonial powers over the fate of Ethiopia after the 1906 tripartite agreement between Britain, France and Italy. It thus provoked immediate reaction from both Ethiopia and France. Ras Tafari reacted in two very different ways. His letter of 16 June, 1926, to the Italian representative in Addis Ababa, Conte Colli, who a few days earlier had transmitted to the heir to the throne a telegram of reassurance from Mussolini, expressed absolute confidence in the good intentions of Il Duce.¹ Three days later, however, he complained to the secretary of the League of Nations on the conclusion of such an agreement by two member states and its imposition on a third member state. He added that Ethiopia could not be stampeded into progress and civilization and pleaded for time. He particularly deplored the clause about the exclusive Italian sphere of economic influence which was both a threat to the independence of Ethiopia and inconsistent with the principles of the League; economic influence and political control, he argued, were inseparable.² In another letter to the League on 6th September, he further protested that the agreement was contrary to Article 20 of the Covenant and hence null and void. Moreover, the two signatory powers, while trying to allay Ethiopian suspicion by expressions of friendship and good faith,

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1. B.S., 15.8.26; The Times, 14.7.26; Mars'e Hazan, Zawditu, pp. 345a-348.
 2. Haile Selassie, p.110; Mars'e Hazan, Zawditu, pp. 348-351.
 3. GPM 4592H, minutes, 20.7.26; memo, 30.8.26.
 4. US 884.6461/14, Skinner to sec. of St., 8.4.26.

had already started imposing the agreement on Ethiopia by jointly informing the government about it.¹ An anonymous contributor to Birhanina Salam also exposed the precarious nature of Ethiopia's independence and the hollowness of the League's guarantees when Italy and Britain could conclude such an agreement.² Another writer felt that the obstacles placed on Ethiopian merchants seeking to trade with the Sudan were a direct result of the exclusive clauses of both the 1906 and 1925 agreements.³

The French also strongly objected to what they argued was the precursor of colonial annexation, particularly in view of the openly expansionist ideas then emanating from the Fascist press.⁴ German opposition was lukewarm and was soon dispelled by reassurances from the Italian ambassador in Berlin.⁵ The United States, the greatest beneficiary of the "open door policy" towards Ethiopia, resented what it thought was the carving up of Ethiopia.⁶ The British and Italian response to all this was that the 1925 agreement gave them nothing that they had not already secured by the 1906 agreement,

1. Ibid., p. 116. Article 20 of the Covenant read: "The Members of the League severally agree that this Covenant is accepted as abrogating all obligations or understandings inter se which are inconsistent with the terms thereof, and solemnly undertake that they will not hereafter enter into any engagements inconsistent with the terms thereof."

2¹/₂ B.S., 10.6.26.

3. See above, p.259 B.S., 2.9.26; cf. The Times, 17.8.26.

4. FO 371/11560, FO memo, 9.2.26; FO 371/11561, Crewe to FO, 20.3.25; cf. A. Klobukowski, "La Question de l'Abyssinie," La Revue de Paris, 33e annee, no.18, 15.9.26, and B.S., 17.3.27.

5. GFM 4592H, minutes, 20.7.26; memo, 10.8.26.

6. US 884.6461/14, Skinner to sec. of st., 8.4.26.

that the former merely represented a redefinition of the latter, an Anglo-Italian accord with no adverse bearing on the interests of a third party - or, as an editorial of The Times put it, "The whole purpose of the agreement is simply that Great Britain and Italy, instead of hindering each other in that part of the world should cooperate".¹ Some of their sympathizers went further and hailed the agreement as a final blow to the techniques of Ethiopian rulers to play off one power against another, "An end of the undignified system in vogue at Addis Ababa, where the visit of a European to any of the consulates meant backdoor espionage set in motion from the others."² The Italians accused the French of instigating Ethiopian opposition (after Tafari had initially expressed confidence in Italian good intentions) out of an ulterior motive to thwart the projected Italian railway, which they feared would compete with the French one.³

It was not long before some British observers began to be assailed by doubts as to the wisdom of their government's decision. In August 1926, one journal queried whether Italian support was so indispensable in securing the Tana concession and whether it was prudent for Britain to be so totally identified with future Italian designs on Ethiopia. It went on to blame the Ethiopian government, which had consistently frustrated decades

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1. 3.7.26, also 28.6.26; cf. Murray to Secretary of League, 3.8.26, and Grandi to Secretary of League, 7.8.26 in Haile Sellassie, pp. 112, 114.
 2. Sudan Herald, 14.8.26, 17.7.26.
 3. The Times, 28.6.26, 5.7.26, 30.7.26.

of British efforts to acquire the concession, "for Britain's action of despair in identifying herself with Italian aspirations."¹ But the Foreign Office went ahead to apply the terms of the agreement with alacrity. To dispel any Italian doubts of good faith, all British companies seeking concessions in western Ethiopia were promptly discouraged, although such recognition of Italian exclusive influence was, according to the agreement, conditional on British acquisition of the Tana concession with Italian support.² The Sudan government argued that not only was such premature recognition of Italian interests injurious to Ethio-Sudanese trade, but also would tend to induce Italy to assume a half-hearted attitude towards British efforts to secure the concession.³ In 1930, MacMichael confided to Schuster: "That accursed 1926 agreement with Italy was unquestionably a terrible mistake, unnecessary, poisoning the atmosphere, and destructive to British enterprise."⁴ Sandford also criticized the obsession with Tana to the exclusion of other important British interests in Ethiopia and the surrender of western Ethiopia in exchange for support which could have been dispensed with, as the 1902 treaty between Ethiopia and Britain gave sufficient guarantees to the latter with regard to the

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1. Near East and India, 5.8.26.
 2. FO 371/15383, record of conversation between Barton & Murray, 15.4.31.
 3. FO 371/12338, Bertrick to FO, 29.3.27.
 3. FO 371/11561, Sterry to Lloyd, 21.2.26; cf., FO 371/12339, Huddleston to Lloyd, 26.11.26, and FO 371/15388, FO minutes on encl. in Barton to Henderson, 15.12.30.
 4. SA DT 387.7, MacMichael to Schuster, 30.10.30.
 5. FO 371/13340, Chamberlain to ...

waters of Lake Tana.¹ The British minister in Addis Ababa, too, lamented: "I fear we have given away whatever remained to us as a sphere by the 1891 protocol, confirmed in 1906 to the west of the 35th meridian.... We have given up the west."² What precisely the west (i.e. western Ethiopia) was remained an unresolved issue. The first serious attempt to provide some definition was made in February 1927, when the Italian sphere was assumed as lying east of 35°E longitude and north of 6° North latitude unless the Italians argued that the 1925 agreement superseded the 1891 protocol; on this basis, the British legation in Addis Ababa waived its customary caution to support the Sudan Building and Agricultural Company in its application for a concession to build the Bure-Gambella road.³ The Gambella enclave, which was granted to the British by a separate treaty with Ethiopia, was in any case deemed not transferable.⁴ Subsequently, the definition was varied to a recognition of the whole of western Ethiopia, with the exception of the Gambella enclave, as the Italian sphere of economic influence.⁵ Thus all British enterprises seeking investment opportunities in western Ethiopia were denied any official British government support, lest the Italians be offended. The

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1. FO 371/11564, Sandford memo, 14.6.26.
 2. FO 371/12339, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 12.12.26.
 3. FO 371/12338, Bentinck to FO, 29.3.27, 4.4.27.
 4. FO 371/12339, Murray to Bentinck, 3.2.27; cf. Huddleston to Lloyd, 26.11.26, on the value the Sudan government attached to the retention of Gambella. See FO 371/11566, Murray to Maclean, 21.10.26, for an earlier attempt to define the Italian sphere.
 5. FO 371/13840, Chamberlain to Dunbar, 29.5.29.

APPENDIX A *

Tana concession remained a mirage to the end. Nor did the
TRADE BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND THE SUDAN
 Italians make any significant use of the sphere which the

British were so much at pains to clear for them. To the

Gambella enclave the British, more particularly Consul

Erskine, stuck with tenacity even when the surrounding region

was swept over by the brute force of Fascist arms in 1936.

Year	Matera	Burmas and	Gambella	Total
1915	13,512	3,292	3,709	20,513
1916	17,822	3,709	3,709	25,240
1917	24,212	3,709	3,709	31,630
1918	24,212	3,709	3,709	31,630
1919	27,212	3,709	3,709	34,630
1920	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1921	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1922	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1923	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1924	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1925	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1926	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1927	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1928	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1929	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1930	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1931	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1932	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630
1933	28,212	3,709	3,709	35,630

* The appendices are taken from the report of the

A.R., sec. for the year 1933-34, p. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

Sudan Handbook, 1934, p. 10.

APPENDIX A *TRADE BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND THE SUDAN

<u>Year</u>	<u>Matamma</u>	<u>Kurmuk and Roseires</u>	<u>Gambella</u>	<u>Total</u>
1913	£E30,421	5,647	103,174	139,242
1914	23,543	4,331	89,906	117,783
1915	19,513	3,692	83,705	106,910
1916	27,473	3,708	103,826	135,007
1917	54,816	11,704	131,630	198,150
1918	54,940	14,581	236,496	306,017
1919	57,697	14,504	173,413	245,614
1920	58,243	10,382	306,752	375,377
1921	78,548	15,949	138,809	233,306
1922	79,009	28,301	221,273	328,583
1923	63,297	27,950	188,746	279,993
1924	80,071	23,804	268,402	372,077
1925	80,149	34,344	355,990	470,483
1926	59,656	23,681	286,325	369,662
1927	50,796	26,489	193,027	270,312
1928	53,637	36,706	248,833	339,176
1929	48,639	49,262	302,854	400,755
1930	47,227	52,877	226,764	326,868
1931	36,939	47,614	76,512	161,065
1932	27,961	75,949	156,507	260,417
1933	30,626	86,632	149,156	266,414

* The appendices are compiled from CEB, A.R., 1913-31;
A.R., sec. for ec. devt. & statistics of for. tr., 1932-34;
Sudan Handbook, pp. 472-75.

APPENDIX BSUDAN IMPORTS FROM ETHIOPIA

<u>Year</u>	<u>Matamma</u>	<u>Kurmuk and Roseires</u>	<u>Gambella</u>	<u>Total</u>
1913	£E24,437	3,916	37,255	65,608
1914	11,809	2,708	37,488	52,088
1915	9,428	2,931	20,566	32,925
1916	16,888	3,192	56,170	76,250
1917	30,589	6,418	77,652	14,659
1918	32,328	12,356	136,874	181,558
1919	37,472	12,544	100,372	150,338
1920	27,910	8,298	224,531	260,739
1921	53,199	14,531	102,405	170,135
1922	46,716	26,723	171,201	244,640
1923	36,221	26,861	119,607	182,689
1924	49,039	22,980	187,033	259,052
1925	59,248	32,630	212,048	303,926
1926	42,391	22,392	173,738	238,521
1927	30,835	24,989	124,736	180,560
1928	29,094	27,044	145,647	201,785
1929	21,331	36,718	178,762	236,811
1930	23,171*	40,052	147,496	230,719
1931	18,557**	31,673	53,520	103,750
1932	11,215***	35,336	124,897	171,448
1933	11,459	39,703	103,699	154,861

* plus MTD to the value of £E3,942

** plus MTD to the value of £E3,461

*** plus MTD to the value of £E3,396

APPENDIX CSUDAN EXPORTS TO ETHIOPIA

<u>Year</u>	<u>Matamma</u>	<u>Kurmuk and Roseires</u>	<u>Gambella</u>	<u>Total</u>
1913	£E 426	1,025	7	1,458
1914	140	419	851	1,410
1915	549	275	2,099	2,923
1916	785	405	6,307	7,497
1917	1,422	445	14,372	16,239
1918	1,679	663	14,372	17,194
1919	1,227	906	8,221	10,354
1920	660	1,039	12,424	14,123
1921	1,962	1,400	10,560	13,922
1922	2,523	1,406	12,531	16,460
1923	2,575	1,023	9,661	13,259
1924	1,601	785	7,450	9,836
1925	1,075	528	8,427	10,030
1926	746	653	10,311	11,710
1927	1,401	614	11,528	13,543
1928	1,821	539	10,255	12,615
1929	3,349	642	17,685	21,676
1930	2,760	708	11,310	14,778
1931	2,144	1,936	289	4,369
1932	1,866	4,801	84	6,751
1933	1,558	8,676	5,355	15,589

APPENDIX D

TRANSIT TO SUDAN RE-EXPORTS TO ETHIOPIA SUDAN

(All via Gambella, unless otherwise indicated)

Year	Matamma	Kurmuk and Roseires	Gambella	Total
INWARDS		OUTWARDS		
1913	£E5,558	Total 706 Sudan	From 7,520 Ethiopia	13,784
1914	11,237	1,204	5,107	17,548
1915	9,536	486	6,078	16,220
1916	9,800	111	9,593	19,504
1917	21,725	132	21,341	43,198
1918	20,933	1,563	73,894	96,389
1919	18,998	1,054	37,702	57,754
1920	29,673	1,045	68,431	99,149
1921	23,387	18	21,020	44,425
1922	29,770	172	36,141	66,083
1923	24,501	66	51,024	75,591
1924	29,431	39	70,353	99,823
1925	19,826	1,186	49,870	70,882
1926	16,207	636	67,118	84,031
1927	18,560	886	34,779	54,225
1928	22,722	9,123	35,919	67,764
1929	23,959	11,902	19,126	54,987
1930	21,296	12,117	15,413	48,826
1931	16,238	14,005	4,289	34,532
1932	14,880	35,812	8,117	58,809
1933	17,609	38,253	7,918	63,780
1933	21,010			21,010

* £E1,080 via Matamma and Roseires to Ethiopia, and via Gambella.

** £E312 via Matamma

*** plus "Associated Silver Sales" of £E100 to value of 1933.

APPENDIX ETRANSIT TRADE BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND THE SUDAN

(All via Gambella, unless otherwise indicated)

Year	<u>INWARDS</u>		<u>OUTWARDS</u>		
	To Ethiopia	Total Sudan	From Ethiopia	Total Sudan	Total
1913	£E31,803	34,506	26,589	34,644	58,392
1914	18,617	23,065	27,843	34,725	46,460
1915	30,951	56,267	24,011	30,008	54,962
1916	10,601	43,796	21,155	33,308	31,756
1917	5,789*	36,548	18,265	21,597	24,054
1918	2	201	10,874	13,754	10,876
1919	2,060	2,557	25,058	40,354	27,118
1920	444	35,877	922	32,430	1,366
1921	120	32,520	4,704	22,166	4,824
1922	914	50,020	486	19,700	1,400
1923	5,873	38,244	2,671	30,422	8,544
1924	1,004	50,771	2,562	26,252	3,566
1925	81,497	181,585	4,148	44,226	85,645
1926	27,935**	171,328	7,153	66,668	35,088
1927	12,545	137,740	9,439	109,437	21,984
1928	25,133	220,736	31,879	174,904	57,012
1929	75,135	274,705	11,966	147,909	87,101
1930	24,605	187,780	7,940	149,632	32,543
1931	9,134	74,296	9,280	74,714	18,414
1932	11,822	60,737	11,527***	45,212	23,349
1933	23,018		9,106		32,124

* £E1,080 via Matamma and £E4,709 via Kurmuk, none via Gambella.

** £E312 via Matamma

*** plus "Abyssinian silver coins" to Britain to value of £E7,350.

APPENDIX FQUANTITY OF COFFE IMPORTED TO THE SUDAN, 1918-1932

9. Traditional politico-military titles in descending order of importance
(in tons)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>via Gambella</u>
1918	3,410	2,418
1919	2,270	1,755
1920	4,219	2,290
1921	3,377	2,279
1922	4,466	3,151
1923	3,605	2,042
1924	4,569	2,559
1925	4,163	2,930
1926	3,183	2,526
1927	3,720	2,459
1928	3,754	3,061
1929	4,064	2,586
1930	6,349	3,858
1931	4,234	1,944
1932	5,093	3,214

GLOSSARY

1. Ethiopian Titlesa. Traditional politico-military titles in descending order of importance

nigusa nagast - king of kings = Emperor

nigus - king

ras bitwadam - combination of ras and bitwadam
importing power and favour

ras - literally "head"

dajazmach (dajach for short)

fitawrari - "commander of the vanguard", a title of
much higher importance when borne by
the war minister, as was commonly the case.

qañazmach - "commander of the right"

grazmach - "commander of the left"

balambaras - "head of a fort"

b. Other titles

abun - bishop. The suffix "-a" is added only if the
title is used in conjunction with a name, e.g.

Abuna Mattewos

Ato - equivalent to Mr.

bajirond - royal treasurer.

basha - probably a derivative of "pasha", but with much
reduced powers than the Turkish antecedent

bitwadam - most favoured courtier, imperial counsellor

blatta - a title generally signifying learning

muwlij - literally "child", almost invariably reserved for sons of the masafint.

shenagadras - "chief trader", supervisor of trade and

shifto - band collector of customs.

wagshalaga - "commander of a thousand", now equivalent to major.

wakil - agent or representative

2. Sudanese (Arabic) titles

amil - Mahdist title, meaning "agent", replaced amir after 1884

amir - Mahdist title, meaning "commander"

makk - a vassal king subordinate to the Funj sultan

mugaddam - lieutenant (in the generic sense)

umda - village head

3. Miscellaneous

abujedid - unbleached grey sheeting

aman - guarantee of security and immunity from punishment granted on submission to the Mahdists, and later to the Anglo-Egyptian forces

balabat - in origin holder of rist (hereditary land), in recent usage the traditional rulers of the southern provinces of Ethiopia

chat - Catha edulis, a mildly narcotic plant grown mostly in eastern Ethiopia

dammur - a coarse calico-like fabric

masafint - princes

BIBLIOGRAPHY

muwallad - half caste, in origin signifying half-Egyptian

Unpublished Sources and half-Sudanese parentage

A. shamma - cloth woven by traditional craftsmanship

shifta - bandit or rebel, Khartoum

wagia (wogia) - a unit of weight measure for gold; 12

the subject than the Public Records Office (PRO) in London. wagia = c. 1 lb. Files are a mine of information on Gambella. The Civil Secretary

wakil - agent or representative
Ethiopian Motor Transport Co. Ltd. I did not have full access to the Blue Nile Province files.

a. Blue Nile Province Files

Class 1 - Boxes 7/41, 9/51, 28/210, 61/431, 62/434

b. Civil Secretary Files

Class 1 - Boxes 12/364, 13/3/3-4, 13/3/5, 64/4/21, 65/7/23-24, 112/3/10.

c. Intelligence Files

Class 1 - Boxes 4/18, 5/20-25, 6/26-30, 7/31, 12/35-36, 13/57-61, 14/62-68, 15/72-74, 16/75-76, 17/85, 18/84, 19/87, 19/88.

Class 2 - Boxes 17/144-147, 18/148-150, 19/151-153, 19/154-155, 19/156-157, 20/158, 20/159, 21/160-161, 22/174-175, 23/182-183, 24/184-185, 25/186-187.

Class 3 - Boxes 4/44-45

Class 4 - Boxes 2/19, 1/19-2/19.

2. Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa

US State Department archives on Ethiopia - Despatches of American consuls from Addis, Harar, Dire Dawa and Ababa, invested with a certain measure of detachment in this period because of the United States' exclusion from the club of tripartite powers Britain, France, and Italy most interested in Ethiopia and most capable of exerting pressure on her.

US 884.00/02, 106, 177, 183-34, 185, 186, 187, 884.001/1, 2, 4, 5, 13-15; 884.002/3, 884.003-05; 884.404/11; 884.501/1; 884.502/2; 884.503/3; 884.5151/2; 884.516/1; 884.61/1; 884.62/2; 884.77/1; 884.77/2, 11, 15/16, 18.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

3. Ethiopian Ministry of Mines, Addis Ababa.

1. Unpublished SourcesA. Archival

1. Central Records Office, Khartoum

It has material of much more direct relevance to the subject than the Public Records Office (PRO) in London. The Intelligence files are a mine of information on Gambella. The Civil Secretary files contain the correspondence regarding the Ethiopian Motor Transport Co. Ltd. I did not have full access to the Blue Nile Province files.

a. Blue Nile Province Files

Class 1 - Boxes 7/41, 9/51, 28/210, 61/431, 62,/434

b. Civil Secretary Files

Class 1 - Boxes 12/3/14, 13/1/2-4, 13/3/5, 64/4/31, 65/7/23-24, 112/3/10.

c. Intelligence Files

Class 1 - Boxes 4/18, 5/20-25, 6/26-28, 7/33, 12/55-56, 13/57-61, 14/62-68, 15/72-73, 16/76-79, 17/85, 19/94, 19/97, 19/100.

Class 2 - Boxes 17/144-147, 18/148-150, 18/153, 19/154-155, 19/157-61, 20/168, 20/170, 21/171-173, 22/174-178, 23/182-186, 24/187-197, 25/198-205.

Class 5 - Boxes 4/44-45.

Class 6 - Boxes 3/12, 4/13-15.

2. Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa.

US State Department archives on microfilm - despatches of American consuls from Aden, Marseilles, and Addis Ababa, invested with a certain measure of detachment in this period because of the United States' exclusion from the club of tripartite powers (Britain, France, and Italy) most interested in Ethiopia and most capable of exerting pressure on her.

US 884.00/99, 106, 127, 133-34, 137, 148, 150, 164; 884.001/1, 3, 4, 8, 13-15; 884.014/5; 884.113/14-15; 884.404/11; 884.50/1; 884.5034/1; 884.515/1; 884.5151/2; 884.516/3; 884.63/7; 884.6461, 884.77/1; 741.65/18, 46.

3. Ethiopian Ministry of Mines, Addis Ababa.

Reports, mostly of a technical nature, by foreign surveyors and mining experts. Relevant information was found in the following:

NC 36-16/1437/M8u
 NC 36-16/437/D3r
 NC 36-8/431/H4p
 NC 36-8/200/H4r

4. Oriental Section, University Library, Durham

Of greater value to internal Sudanese history than to relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan. But the following have been found useful:

Boxes 100, 104/14-15, 17; 122/1-10; 182/1/1; 182/2/2; 182/3/1-2; 132; 181/1; 209; 210; 212/14/11; 212/4, 10, 11; 266; 294/3; 295/1-11; 469; 470.

5. Public Records Office, London.

a. Board of Trade archives, BT 31/24271/152116

Files of the Abyssinian Corporation.
 Disappointingly little more than the memorandum and articles of association.

b. Foreign Office archives

(i) FO 1, General Correspondence, Abyssinia.

Volumes 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 51, 54, and 56 contain the correspondence on the boundaries, including the boundary negotiations.

(ii) FO 141, Embassy and Consular Archives, Egypt.

A much neglected series, contains despatches from Ethiopia as well as the Sudan, provides the local (i.e. frontier) colouring generally absent from the FO 1 volumes.

The following volumes, for the years 1899-1909, have been consulted:

347, 353, 356, 364, 371, 378, 386, 393, 398, 402, 409, 414, 416, 422, 423.

Volume 432 (1929) also has material on communications in western Ethiopia.

(iii) FO 371, General Correspondence, Abyssinia

Manuscripts

This new series replaces FO 1 after 1906.

1. It forms an important point of departure for a study of early twentieth century Ethiopian history. All the volumes for the years 1906-34 have been consulted.

(iv) FO 867/16

Contains minutes of the Governor-General Council, Khartoum. Exceedingly synoptic.

c. German Foreign Ministry archives.

Microfilms of the archives captured at the end of the Second World War are deposited at the PRO and the Foreign Office library in London. The relevant numbers are:

GFM 14/12-14, for the years 1867-1920

3088, 4592H, for the years 1920-1945.

d. Map collection

The following numbers have been found of particular value:

MPK 214, MPK 252, and MPK 353.

6. Rhodes House, Oxford.

Anti-Slavery Papers - Mss Brit Emp S 22/G 23, 29, 276, 490, 660.

7. St. Anthony's College, Oxford

DT 108.6 and DT 387.7, for letters to and from Sir Harold MacMichael.

8. Sudan Library, University of Khartoum

The library has an almost complete collection of the Sudan Intelligence Reports. The collection at the Public Records Office, listed in the series WO 106, has many gaps. The reports appear to have been printed abstractions of the Intelligence files referred to above. They provide convenient summaries of frontier developments. Most of the appendices are indispensable. The reports continue as Sudan Monthly Intelligence Reports after December 1919, and cease to be printed after August 1925. In 1929, a new series, Sudan Monthly Record, takes over.

B. Manuscripts

1. SOAS Ms English 210522 - Arkell Papers, second batch, Box 11.

A brief history of the sa'id. Of even greater interest are the appendices of slavery cases.

2. Bakura Sion Tilahun. Ya-Asosa Beni Shangul Awraja Gizat Tarik. (History of Asosa Beni Shangul District). Addis Ababa, 1961. Copy at IES. A comprehensive description of the district, by an ex-governor. The historical part is on pp. 17-24.
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1928 - 26 July, 13 Sept, 15 Nov, 29 Nov.
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1924 - 6 June, 9 Oct.

1926 - 27 Mar; 17 & 22 Apr; 19, 25, & 28 June; 2, 3, 5, 14, 29, & 30 July; 2 & 17 Aug; 7, 11, & 12 Oct.

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LIST OF INFORMANTS

1. Mr. Dimitros Ganatos, aged c. 70, Addis Ababa - one-time employee of the Ethiopian Motor Transport Company Ltd.
2. Balambras Kabada Marid, aged 67, Mattu (the new capital of Illubabor province) - was a retainer of Dajach Mulugeta.
3. Ato Kasahun Ashine, aged 58, Mattu - born in Gidami, moved to Gore at the age of 9.
4. Ato Kifle Gabra Maryam, aged 73, Gore - much more knowledgeable about the Resistance to Italian occupation than about the period before.
5. Brig. Maurice Lush, aged 77, London - deputy governor of Upper Nile Province, 1932-35.
6. Qañazmach Majid Abud, aged 89, Gore - now bed-ridden, but still amazingly coherent and articulate.
7. Ato Makurya Yamiru, aged 73, Mattu - born in Wallaga; his father was a retainer of Ras Tassamma and governor of Gimira after Sagale (1916).
8. Ato Mamo Lichebo, aged 57, Gore - had useful information on Mocha, particularly portage.
9. Ato Mangiste Dafarsha, aged 67, Gore - ex-retainer of Dajach Kabada Tassamma.
10. Mr. A. G. Pawson, aged 85, Lingfield, Surrey - governor of Upper Nile Province, 1931-34.
11. Mr. Agamemnon Pytharas, aged 57, Addis Ababa - rather flamboyant, but had a kernel of useful information. His father had been active in western Ethiopian trade since 1904.

12. Balambaras Tafari Yigzaw, aged 73, Mattu - in the Gore region since 1923. Somewhat reticent.
13. Qañazmach Taye Tafari, aged c. 43, Addis Ababa - sparse, but reliable, information.
14. Ato Tirunah Ratta, 65, Gore - was a guard at the British consulate in the 1940's.
15. Ya-Mato Alaga Wadajo Takla Maymanot, aged 76, Gore - one of the first few soldiers who received modern military training.
16. Ato Walda Samayat Awi, aged c. 70, Gore - accompanied Dajach Nadaw to Gore.
17. Mr. John Winder, aged 68, Sevenoaks, Kent - DC Gambella, 1936.